

Virtues of the Righteous



Sheikh Ahmad-Haji Abdulaev

Mufti of Dagestan

Muftiyat of the Republic of Dagestan

Makhachkala 2022

Sheikh Ahmad-Haji Abdulaev. Mufti of Dagestan. Virtues of the Righteous. Translated into English from the Arabic, Avar and Russian published editions by Guy Petherbridge and Ibrahim Hj Abdulaev. First Edition. Muftiyat of the Republic of Dagestan: Makhachkala, 2022. – 184 p.

ISBN:978-5-6047244-9-1

In this personal mentoring guide, fundamental concepts of Sufism such as ikhlas (sincerity), tawakkul (reliance on God), istiqamah (steadfastness), sabr (patience), shukr (giving of thanks) are examined within a comprehensive overview of key concepts and insights into the notions of values and the purification of the soul as understood by the righteous scholars of classical Islam. The book is intended for novice devotees and for students and researchers of Islam and all others interested in Islamic spirituality generally.

© Muftiyat of the Republic of Dagestan

Translators' Note: Sheikh Ahmad-Haji Abdulaev first wrote and published this book in Arabic. This was then followed by a version in Avar, the Sheikh's mother tongue. A Russian translation with some modifications for a general readership, "Благонравие праведников", was later produced with close input from the Sheikh. This present English translation was first undertaken by Guy Petherbridge from the Russian and then, on the Sheikh's authority, was correlated together with Ibrahim Hj Abdulaev with the Arabic and Avar versions to retain as closely as possible the character of the original texts.

INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah, Gracious to all in this world and to believers only on the Day of Judgment!

All praise to Almighty Allah – the Lord of all creations! May Allah bless and welcome Muhammad ﷺ, the lord of all the prophets and messengers, as well as his family, companions and those who follow his path until the Day of Judgment.

It is no secret that a good moral temperament is a pillar of faith and its indisputable truth. The higher the people's moral standards are, the more perfect is the *ummah* (community). But when virtue disappears, woes befall. Accordingly, every reasonable person who wants good for society is obliged to closely monitor his moral foundation and try to improve it.

Today, everyone who carefully looks about him will surely observe those hardships and troubles that alter people's moral attitudes and spread evils that weaken *iman* (faith) and kill virtue in the heart. The writing of this book was thus necessary to evoke good moral dispositions in people's hearts, to improve the behavior of Muslims and to purify their *nafs* (ego).

I ask Almighty Allah that this book be useful and serve to improve people's morality. For He is the Lord, Knowing, Hearing and Answering our prayers!

All praise be to the Lord of all creation. May Allah bless and welcome our lord Muhammad ﷺ, his family and companions.

SECTION I

THE NAFS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO HUMAN MORAL QUALITIES

CHAPTER 1



THE ESSENCE OF THE NAFS

Truly, the *nafs* of man (ego) is a divine mystery (*latifa rabbaniyya*), the essence of which cannot be fully comprehended.

Until the moment of its entering the human body, the *nafs* is called the spirit or *ruh*. When, at the behest of Almighty Allah, the spirit is united with the body, it becomes acquainted with other things¹ and thus becomes distracted from its Lord. A veil is then raised between Allah Almighty and the *nafs* which prevents it from becoming close to its Creator.

It is known that by its nature the human soul is a noble creation, since the breath of an angel gives it life. In this regard, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told us, “Verily, the creation of each one of you takes place in your mother’s womb: for forty days in the form of a drop, then for the same time in the form of a clot of blood, and for the same time again in the form of a piece of flesh. And then an angel is sent to the foetus and breathes the spirit (*ruh*) into it. At the same time, the angel receives orders to record four predestinations for this creation: his apportionment (*rizq*), the term of his life, his deeds and his final outcome (whether he will leave this world happy or unhappy).²

After the spirit is united with the body, an astonishing creation is formed, called *insan* (man). Allah made man His caliph (deputy) on earth, so that he might lead a productive way of life. Out of concern for the human *nafs*, the Almighty sent down the Sharias (laws). Truly, knowledge and a good moral disposition (decency) are the two foundations on which the perfecting of the *nafs* of man is formed.

¹ Everything else in the universe besides Almighty Allah.

² If a person dies with iman (faith) in his heart, he will be happy, and if he dies without iman, then he will be unhappy.

As the prescriptions and decrees of Almighty Allah are addressed to the *nafs* of man, and especially as the righteousness and corruption of man is determined by the righteousness and wickedness of his *nafs*, it is through the qualities of their *nafs* that people's righteousness or wickedness are determined, the perfection of the human *nafs* being the main purpose for sending down the divine Books, the revelations of prophets and messengers and the establishment of the Shari`a (laws).

By its nature, inherent to a person's *nafs* are passion, indolence and vulnerability to various life situations and, dominated by bad associates – demons from among the people and jinns, the *nafs* constantly commits sins. Consequently, it is necessary to work on one's *nafs*, to eradicate its flaws which arise from the commission of sins and distance oneself from the harm they cause. This is possible only through sincere repentance and return to Almighty Allah.³

THE NAFS – THE MAIN ENEMY OF MAN

The human *nafs* is based on ill manners, but the servant is ordered to abide by *adab* (ethical norms). The *nafs*, by nature, operates in the domain of contradiction and transgression for it is the inherent enemy of man. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Your greatest enemy is your *nafs*, which is found within you.” Therefore, one who allows his *nafs* free reign in its pleasures and passions is an accomplice of the *nafs* in his own ruin. The righteous, realizing this truth, have cautioned that the root and foundation of every sin, act of carelessness, passion and *shirk*⁴ are contentment with one's *nafs*. As well as vigilance and abstention from that which is proscribed, the basis of obedience to the Creator is discontent with one's *nafs*.

A small deed committed with hope in the Grace of Allah is better than a large one committed with hope in just oneself, because the attributing of hope to oneself contains *shirk*.

³ Return to the path indicated by the Almighty.

⁴ There are two types of *shirk*: major - attribution of equals to Almighty Allah, and minor - committing acts not for the sake of Allah but for show and for some sort of selfish end.

A rational person who acknowledges the essence of his *nafs* and realizes its baseness, need, weakness, frailty and final outcome and anticipates the death of his *nafs*, knows such attributes of his Creator as Power, Infinity, Might, Greatness and Pride; because it is the Lord who is the Creator of *nafs*, who created it from nothing.

When Almighty Allah turned to His *awliya* (beloved servants) and called on them to become closer to Him, He taught them the nearest and easiest pathway to do this. This way is to confront the *nafs*. Almighty Allah turned to one of His favorites in a dream, “Fight with your *nafs*, for there is no other creation in My kingdom which disputes My authority.” One’s *nafs* is constantly endeavouring to acquire qualities that are the attributes of the Almighty, such as pride, greatness and supremacy over people. But these qualities can only be possessed by the Great Creator – Allah, perfect is He of everything unworthy of Him.

THE LEVELS OF THE HUMAN NAFS

A person’s *nafs* is constantly changing. Five levels of a person’s *nafs* are differentiated according to the proximity or remoteness of its possessor from Almighty Allah.

The first level is *an-nafs al-ammara* (*nafs* that repeatedly commands evil doing). It constantly pushes its master to sin and makes him negligent. About such *nafs*, the master and imam of the Sufis, Junaid al-Baghdadi ؒ, said, “*An-nafs al-ammara* encourages spiritual destruction and serves the enemies of man.” By the enemies of man, Junaid al-Baghdadi ؒ means the worldly life and Satan, which make sinful acts attractive to the sons of Adam ؑ.

The second level is *an-nafs al-lawwama* (reproachful *nafs*). It reproaches its master for committing sin.

The third level is *an-nafs al-mulhima* (inspirational *nafs*). The *nafs* of this level instills goodness in its master and encourages goodness.

The fourth level is *an-nafs ar-raziya* (contented *nafs*). This *nafs* is contented with the authority of Almighty Allah and His decision.

It displays complete obedience to the Almighty and accepts everything that Allah chooses for it.

The fifth level is *an-nafs al-marziya* (*nafs* with whom the Almighty is pleased). This is the *nafs* which has won the favour and contentment of Allah, Perfect and Almighty. Upon attainment of this degree, the *murid* takes the first step on the path towards true knowledge of Almighty Allah.

CHAPTER 2

THE CLEANSING OF THE NAFS

Know that *nafs* has veils⁵ of *nur* (light) and darkness. The path for him who wants to cleanse his *nafs* from those veils is in fighting his *nafs* and opposing it. And the root of such opposition and struggle is in detaching and isolating his *nafs* from its habits and doing the opposite of what it desires every time.

Do not think that cleansing the *nafs* is an easy thing and that you can resist it solely by the power of reason, as some philosophers believe. On the contrary, the purification of the *nafs* is similar to the treatment of a seriously ill patient, which should be done under the constant supervision of a skilled physician with extensive experience. Thus the cleansing of the *nafs* is possible only under the supervision of the Prophet ﷺ or a *wali* (righteous person), who has knowledge and experience in this matter. There is no hope of bettering one's *nafs* until the spiritual heart, which is the ruler of the human body, is cleansed. After all, it is only through the improvement of a ruler's moral qualities that its subjects also become better.

Truly, the treatment of the *nafs* is a difficult matter that cannot be cured at once. It requires constant repetition. After all, the *nafs* is like an untamed animal that will not obey its owner, which he cannot keep in check unless it is pulled by the bridle.

⁵ Barriers to knowing Allah.

THREE WAYS OF CLEANSING THE NAFS

Truly, the conquest of the *nafs* is possible in three ways.

The first way is to deprive the *nafs* of all its desires and passions. Just as a stubborn animal becomes compliant if it is fed less, so the *nafs* becomes obedient, if it is deprived of what it desires.

The second way is to burden it with the load of *`ibadat* (worship). Truly, with less feed and an increase in the load, a stubborn animal, losing strength, becomes compliant. The *nafs* behaves in a similar way.

The third way is to ask for help from the Almighty and Most Great Allah in the struggle against one's *nafs*, imploring Him for support, for He created the *nafs* and He knows better its essence and condition.

Know that Almighty Allah told us what path to fight against the *nafs* and has explained the methods of its purification. If a doctor talks of the dangers of a person's favorite foods, explaining that their consumption will lead to various types of disease, the person will refrain from them, thus demonstrating will power and opposition to his *nafs*. Are indeed the words of the prophets endowed with *mu`jizat* (miracles) and the speech of Almighty Allah in the Holy Writings less meaningful than the advice of a doctor whose knowledge and reason are limited?

O, if a person could know which is worse and longer: suffering due to the withdrawal from addictions or torment in fiery hell!

CONFRONTING THE NAFS

Know O my son that in a person's struggle against his *nafs* there are many benefits. However, in following and pleasing the wishes of the *nafs* lies the source of all ills. As an argument, it suffices to cite the unanimous opinion of scholars and sages of all time: that opposition to the *nafs* is the key to all blessings and that the basis of all evil is submissive adherence to the desires of the *nafs*. Theological scholars also consider countering the *nafs* as the basis of the worship of

Allah, emphasizing that the slaughter of the *nafs* with the swords of resistance are one of the most important tasks of the *tariqah*. They say: “Let the *nafs* of one who enters our path taste four varieties of death: red, black, white and green.” By red death is meant the confrontation of the *nafs* and its desires and the struggle against the temptations of worldly life, as well as the struggle against Iblis (Satan) and his assistants. The very colour of this death serves to indicate passions and their suppression, that is - death. Black death is the endurance of people’s harm, and its blackness is a sign of the difficulty and severity of that on the *nafs*. White death symbolises hunger. In this case, the whiteness of death is *nur* (light), which hunger casts on a person’s soul – on his inner world. But green death is the wearing of patched old clothes and the rejection of beautiful apparel one may fancy. And life will, as it were, become green due to contentment with few worldly possessions.

Indeed, Almighty Allah preordained the transmission of *barakat* (grace) from the struggle against *nafs* to each of His servants who resists his passions and desires, even if he not be a Muslim. It is said that a certain Christian monk became famous in Egypt for his knowledge of that which is innermost. To this, a Muslim scholar said: “He must be killed before he plunges Muslims into error.” And, smearing his knife with poison, he went to him. When the scholar knocked on the monk’s door, he said to him: “O, Muslim scholar, drop the knife!” The scholar, throwing away the knife, entered and asked: “How did you do this?” To which the monk replied, “Thanks to opposition to my *nafs*.” After these words, the scholar proposed, “Would you accept Islam?” And the monk answered: “Yes, I testify that there is nothing worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” In surprise, the scholar then asked: “What motivated you to accept Islam?” To this the monk replied, “I asked that my *nafs* accepts Islam but it refused. Then I did the opposite.” So this man received a great benefit precisely from confronting the *nafs*.

Opposition to the *nafs* bears fruit: insight, revelation of secret knowledge by the Almighty (*fath*) and acceptance by Allah. However, agreeing with the *nafs*, indulging its passions and doing

everything it wishes, brings only debasement and procrastination on the pathway of knowledge of Allah. May Almighty Allah protect us from this!

It is recounted that Ibrahim ibn Shayban رضي الله عنه said, “For a long time I wanted to eat lentils to the full, but I had no such an opportunity. And then one day when I was in Sham (Syria), they brought me a bowl of lentils and I ate my fill. Going outside, I saw jugs hanging up with some kind of liquid. I thought that this was vinegar. They asked me, “What are you looking at? These are samples of wine and here are barrels of wine.” Then I went into the cellar and began to destroy the wine barrels and poured out their contents. However, the shop owner thought that I was pouring out the wine on the orders of the Sultan. When he was informed of the true state of affairs, he took me off to the ruler, Ibn Tulun,⁶ who ordered me punished with two hundred lashes with the cane and thrown in jail. I sat in prison until my mentor Abu Abdullah al-Maghribi رضي الله عنه arrived in that city and interceded for me. Afterwards he asked me, “What did you do?” To which I replied, “I wanted to eat my fill of lentils and did so, after which they punished me with two hundred lashes with the cane.” To that the sheikh declared, “You still got off lightly, neither harming yourself nor others.”

Once a person who was sitting in the air without any support was asked how he managed to do this. To which he replied, “I abandoned the desires of my *nafs* and the air became subject to me.”

SELF-CONTROL

Verily, one of the greatest ways to improve and purify the *nafs* is to monitor what the *nafs* says and pushes its owner to do. Thus - if you have authorised someone to represent you who is capable of self-discipline, you will not check up on him. But, if he is one who is not able to control himself, then you will thoroughly monitor and admonish him. Therefore, all your deeds should be performed only for the sake of Allah; for if you do not monitor your deeds, do not think that Allah will leave them without scrutiny.

⁶ Egyptian ruler of that time.

Such a method of self-discipline was a tradition of great persons who achieved a level of knowledge of Allah. Sheikh Makinuddin al-Asmar رحمته, who was one of the seven *budala'*⁷ (one of the great righteous ones), said, "At the beginning of my journey I worked as a tailor. At that time I started to count how many words I uttered during the course of a day. When night fell, I analysed them and found my speech to be not really very verbose. For the good words I rendered thanks to Allah and praised him. And for the remainder I offered repentance to Allah and asked for His forgiveness." He did this until he became one of the *budala'*.

Abu Hafs al-Haddad an-Nishaburi رحمته said that, "The *nafs* of man is absolute darkness. The lamp of his *nafs* is his secret (*sirr*). And the light of this lamp is the support of Allah - *tawfiq*." By the words "the lamp of his *nafs* is his secret (*sirr*)", the scholar implies the secret which is between a servant and Almighty Allah. And this secret is the locus of his sincerity, thanks to which a servant recognizes and realizes that all that happens neither originates nor is implemented by himself but comes only from Almighty Allah. Thus, a servant disclaims having any sort of power or strength himself for the performance of good or the abandonment of evil. And then through the support of Allah a person will be protected from the evil of his *nafs*.⁸

This is why the sheikhs said, "He who has no secret (*sirr*) is doomed to persist in sin."

The most effective means of enabling the self-control of a servant is the awakening of his *nafs* by instructing and reminding it of its outcome with the aim of rectifying it. One of the righteous, addressing his *nafs* said, "O my *nafs*, do you really take no notice of previous generations and the way they built and fitted out their homes and then left this world and all that behind them? And how

7 One of the categories of close servants of Allah, who completely forsook worldly pleasures. There are a strictly specific number of them on earth.

8 The *nafs* of a slave is absolute darkness. His lamp is the secret that exists between a slave and his Lord when the slave does not perceive in himself any strength or power and acknowledges his sinfulness and weakness. After his acknowledging this to Almighty Allah in secret he receives the support of Almighty Allah which (also) protects him from the evil of his ego. All is based on that secret in which a slave acknowledges to his Lord his frailness and consequently on the support which Allah extends to the slave.

the Almighty left their lands and buildings to their enemies? Cannot you see how people accumulate what they do not eat and how they build where they do not live and dream of that which they can never achieve? O my *nafs*, how amazing your doings are! Why do you not see these evident facts? O my *nafs*, may be you are intoxicated with love for high status in society and because of your conceit do not understand this? Do you really not realise that the objective of ambition is solely the desire to gain the esteem of others and for them to bend their hearts to you. Even if all the people on earth were to bow submissively before you and obey you, do you really not comprehend that in fifty years' time neither you nor any who dote on you will still exist? After all, the time will come when they will not even remember you. So how, O *nafs*, can you swap the eternal for that which will disappear in some fifty years?

O *nafs*, are you really not ashamed? You adorn your appearance for the sake of people but secretly act against Almighty Allah and commit sins. Woe upon you! Is Allah indeed for you the most unworthy of those who look at you?⁹ Woe upon you, O *nafs*! If only you knew that in fact you reveal yourself for what you really are, you would understand that all troubles and misfortunes descend on one only because of one's malignity! It is astonishing that you take enjoyment in the growth of your worldly wealth but do not grieve over the lessening of the days allotted you! What is the use of increasing wealth when your life is becoming ever shorter?"

STRUGGLE WITH THE NAFS

Indulgence in one's desires and abstention from obedience to the Almighty are two qualities of the *nafs* which impede achievement of any kind of grace. When the *nafs* is enflamed by anger there is no better remedy that gives a better result and outcome than extinguishing the anger's fire by kindness and gentleness. When the *nafs* desires free reign one must break and demean it by reminding it of its lowliness, the meanness of its origin and the abhorrence of its actions.

⁹ That is to say, you put in order that which people look upon but that which Allah looks at – your inner world – you leave mired in sins.

The righteous Dhul-Nun al-Misri ؒ said, “Corruption afflicts men in six ways: ⁽¹⁾ They have weak intention in performing deeds oriented towards the Hereafter; ⁽²⁾ Their bodies become hostages to their lusts; ⁽³⁾ They remain full of hope for worldly gain in spite of the nearness of death; ⁽⁴⁾ They prefer to please creatures over pleasing the Creator; ⁽⁵⁾ They follow their own desires, while turning their backs on the custom of their Prophet ﷺ (sunna); and ⁽⁶⁾ They justify their failings by invoking a few slips of the early Muslims, while burying their many virtues.”¹⁰

There are many methods and ways of fighting the *nafs* which are discussed in authentic books of the great sheikhs. So that those who strive for the satisfaction of Allah and virtue may always remember them, we provide some of their observations.

1. One of those who knew Allah said, “We embraced Sufism not because of certain words and expressions but thanks to hunger, the renouncing of worldly delights, abandonment of habits, fulfillment of the decrees of Allah and avoidance of His prohibitions.”

2. Another great sage was asked, “With what shackles is it necessary to restrain one’s *nafs*?” He replied, “Hold it down with hunger and thirst, demean it by quenching its desires, suppress its sense of greatness and break it by renouncing the attributes of the wealthy.”

3. It is transmitted from Abu Yazid Bastami ؒ, “In a dream I saw the Lord Almighty, and asked Him, “Oh, my Lord, can You show me the pathway to knowing You?” Almighty Allah replied, “Abandon your *nafs* and come to Me.”

4. One of the sheikhs said, “Our path (*tariqah*) in the fight against the *nafs* is based on three rules: eat only when feeling hungry; go to sleep only when drowsy and talk only when really necessary.”

5. Another spiritual mentor said to his disciple. “Misfortune occurs for three reasons: a bad moral disposition, persistent adherence

¹⁰ Thus, for example, they justified themselves by making use of the disagreement which occurred between ‘Ali and Mu’awiyah ؓ, distorting facts while disregarding their wonderful virtues and meritorious qualities.

to customary habits and corrupt associations.” The student asked, “What does a bad moral disposition mean?” The mentor replied, “This is the consumption of that which is *haram* (forbidden).” The student then asked, “What does persistent adherence to customary habits mean?” The mentor replied, “That is gazing on that which is *haram*, the enjoyment of that which is forbidden and a propensity to slandering.” The student asked again, “And what does bad associations mean?” To that the mentor replied, “That is the pursuit of desires every time they kindle in the soul.”

6. One of the theological scholars said, “It is our obligation not to retaliate for the sake of our *nafs* against those who have upset us, but rather to ask forgiveness and apologise to them, while at the same time showing modesty and simplicity. If in our heart a base attitude against someone arises, it is necessary to serve and show goodness to him, until we see him otherwise.

Thus, for one who cherishes his *nafs*, religion becomes contemptible. But, on the contrary, for one who cherishes his religion, it is his *nafs* which becomes contemptible. Ordinary people try to give importance to their deeds but the chosen ones instead endeavor to refine their spiritual qualities (*ahwal*). To endure hunger and night vigil is easily done. But to heal one’s morals and cleanse them of pernicious habits, that is very arduous.

SELF-SATISFACTION

Whoever has acknowledged the absolute baseness of his *nafs* does not consider any person on earth as being worst or more contemptible than himself. There is nothing more necessary for a servant than his knowledge of his *nafs* that compels his dissatisfaction with it. Thus a person should not be satisfied with himself and with his *nafs*. Indeed, the more a servant knows himself, the more he improves his spiritual condition (*hal*) and his standing (*maqam*) will be elevated before Almighty Allah.

The disciplining of the *nafs*, in its turn, occurs through the riddance of qualities which are reproachable and acquiring those

which are praiseworthy. And the root of all reproachable qualities is self-satisfaction (*`ujb*).¹¹ That is to say, first of all it is necessary to forego self-satisfaction, as this acts as a barrier to the acquisition of virtues. Thus, the main requirement for the presence of praiseworthy qualities (*fazail*) is the absence of vanity. One who does not have a high opinion of himself is advancing to possession of a good moral disposition and the cleansing of his *nafs*. Indeed, man by his very nature has a yearning for perfection and a dislike of flaws. Having cleansed himself of vanity, a person thus arrives at the acquisition of praiseworthy qualities and the abandonment of vices. In recognizing his inadequacies, a person no longer experiences feelings of vanity or pride. On the contrary, if in this condition he should be motivated to perfection, he will strive for it with greater desire. In this way, influenced by both divine reminders and his natural essence, his moral disposition will be rectified until he achieves the perfection predestined for him.

It is known that one of the hidden ills of the *nafs* is its predilection for enjoying praise. This is indicated when the *nafs* is deprived of praise and it becomes lazy and falls into despondency. Satisfaction with one's *nafs* and having a high opinion of oneself are factors which provoke the wrath of Almighty Allah. Ibn Ataillah رحمته الله was asked, "What most rapidly incurs the wrath of Almighty Allah?" He replied, "Admiration for one's *nafs* and its conditions." Even worse is when a servant expects a reward for his own deeds.

The flaws of one's *nafs* can be detected by being suspicious of it and mistrusting it in all its states and calling it to account. Know that the Almighty did not elevate His servant in any greater way than by revealing to him the baseness of his *nafs* and did not degrade a servant except by putting a veil between him and abasement of his *nafs*.

How then can a rational person be content with his ego? Indeed, the prophet Yusuf عليه السلام said (meaning), "I do not exculpate my *nafs*, as it commands evil, except by the mercy and suppression of my Lord. Truly my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful". (Sura Yusuf, ayah 53)

¹¹ `Ujb - having a high opinion of oneself, self-esteem, self-admiration and pride.

Commentators on the Quran write, “This means, I do not consider that my *nafs* is cleansed of evil by itself. That is to say, based on its natural essence, I do not ascribe such a dignity to it but entirely rely upon the support of Almighty Allah. By the word ‘*nafs*’ is meant all *nafs*, including the *nafs* of the prophet Yusuf عليه السلام himself. It is further stated that the *nafs* by its nature ‘commands evil’. This means that it foments disobedience and wicked deeds.”

The *nafs* – above all – takes enjoyment in passions, preferring that which is worthless and vacuous and being constantly drawn to reviled acts. After all, were it otherwise, the *nafs* of most people would not be subordinated to their desires, concocting all manner of deceits for the satisfaction of their egos and thus evil would not arise from them. Therefore, it is said that the more rational a son of Adam عليه السلام and the higher his level before Almighty Allah, the better he perceives the flaws of his *nafs*. He who continually keeps watch on the shortcomings of his *nafs* mistrusts and blames it to an even greater degree, thus reducing its high opinion of itself to nothing.

In the book “At-Ta’wilat an-Najmiyya” it is said, “The *nafs* by its nature is created as commanding evil. If it is allowed free rein, nothing but bad will result, because it orders the doing only of evil. But if Allah is Merciful and regards it with His care, He will completely change the natural character of the *nafs*, replacing notorious qualities with good ones. Then the *nafs*, which commanded the doing of evil, becomes the commander of good. That is to say, it becomes obedient to God, and its wickedness is converted into goodness. And this is why the Prophet ﷺ beseeched Allah with this prayer, “O Lord, do not entrust me to my *nafs* even for an instant or even less!”

A GREAT TESTAMENT

In the book “al-Bahjat” there are two testamentary texts of our master, Imam Bahauddin Muhammad an-Naqshbandi رحمته الله, which he left to his *murid*. We provide these highly valuable testaments for thinking and contemplative people.

First: “No matter what level a true *murid* of the Sufi path has reached, he must see himself merely as a beginner who is taking his first step.”

Second: “Even if a *murid* is raised to the highest level on the path to self-perfection (*suluk*), he must consider himself a hundred times worse than the pharaoh.”

A rational person must always control himself, even if his *nafs* has ascended to the highest level of tranquility (*itmi’nan*): even then he cannot be protected from the machinations and intrigues of his *nafs*. So how can we, ordinary people, susceptible to egoism and love of high status, be safeguarded from our *nafs*? Allah alone is the Bearer of aid.

In truth, we cannot be extricated from the machinations of our *nafs* on our own – and then only if the Lord blesses us with the benefit of His care. There is no doubt that it is these imperfections that incite one to dishonesty and disobedience. Bad traits are an illness for which the medicine is the *tariqah*. Reproachable qualities are as perfume for the impure while the *tariqah* is like water: to cleanse the impure it is appropriate to use water. Allah is the All-Knowing. And there is no force for the doing of good or power to reject the reproachable other than through the aid of Glorious and All-Powerful Allah.

CHAPTER 3

REPENTANCE

Know that the first of all stations is repentance (*tawba*) and what comes after it is not accepted without it. If sincerely repentant, Almighty Allah loves you, as He said (meaning), “Truly, Allah loves those who are penitent and purified.” (Sura al-Baqarah, ayah 222) This means that Allah rewards and honours those who repent their sins and loves those who cleanse themselves of heedlessness. The Almighty also said (meaning), “He who is unrepentant is an oppressor”. (Sura al-Hujurat, ayah 11)

Theological scholars say, “They are oppressors, because instead of submission they persist in disobedience and subject themselves to punishment.” In the book “At-Ta’wilat an-Najmiyya” is written, “by the words of the Almighty, ‘He who is unrepentant’ is meant he who did not relinquish words and deeds of Satan” i.e. from having high opinion of themselves and contempt for others. And the words ‘They are oppressors’ mean that they are among the damned, deprived of grace and cast out together with Iblis. As Almighty Allah said (meaning), “May the damnation of Allah be upon the oppressors.” (Sura Hud, ayah 18)

Within these words is undisputable evidence that one who rejects repentance becomes an oppressor. Thus, it is necessary to sincerely repent one’s vileness and sins, especially those that are mentioned above.

When a servant commits sins, he is enveloped in darkness and - just as disobedience is like fire - so darkness is like its smoke. If a fire burns in a house for seventy years, will smoke really not blacken it? Thus the heart also is shrouded in darkness because of manifold disobediences and is cleansed only through repentance to Almighty Allah.

Know that disobedience has both obvious and hidden impacts on a person. The effect of the hidden is callousness of the heart, obduracy of his desires,¹² obstinacy of the *nafs* and its blind pursuit of vices, loss of sweetness in the worship of Allah and also the increase in pursuits impeding closeness to the Creator and becoming a servant of his *nafs*’s desires. Even if in disobedience to Allah there were no other evil than a person’s change of name (from “obedient” to “disobedient”) that should suffice for him. For you see when you are obedient to the Creator they call you “doing good.” However, on the contrary, when you disobey the Almighty, your name changes to “causing evil and spurning Almighty Allah.” Now this is only a change of name but what of the magnitude of

¹² The heart of the disobedient becomes callous and not softened through the remembrance of Allah; it does not accept guidance or remonstrance. His soul resists and does not heed the command to obey the Almighty. The sinner’s heart overflows with desires which constrain him: there remains no place for goodness within it.

the debacle of a change from the sweetness of obedience to the Creator to the “sweetness” of disobedience and of replacing the enjoyment of serving Almighty Allah with the “enjoyment” of one’s passions?

Remember that the heart is like a tree whose roots are irrigated by the water of obedience to Allah and its fruit is the positive influence of the heart on other parts of the body. The fruit of the eyes are edifying lessons learnt, the fruit of the ears is listening to the Quran¹³ and the fruit of the tongue is the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), while the fruit of the arms and legs is persisting in the doing of good. However, if the heart wilts - that is, if it becomes parched from disobedience to Allah - its fruit will not ripen and will fall.

Therefore, among our most important tasks is the betterment of our *nafs* and its perfection through sincere repentance. Thus the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “For two reasons I fear for my *ummah* (community) more than anything – their pursuit of their desires and their insatiable long-term dreams and aspirations. You see, the following of one’s desires closes off the path to truth and the avaricious longings for the worldly force one to be oblivious to the eternal world.”

Therefore, those who are repentant must be continually vigilant and vexed and dissatisfied with their *nafs*. Theological scholars have explained that repentance is the sensation of trepidation and fear which one should experience until the end of one’s allotted days. After expressing sincere repentance, it is necessary to first begin by atoning for offences which one may have caused, by repaying one’s debts and by fulfilling one’s obligations to others. If it is not possible to do this straight away, it is necessary at least to intend performing that which one knows one should do. It is necessary to ask forgiveness of one’s sins from those you have caused evil and forgiveness from creditors whom you are not able to repay and make *du`a* for them until your affairs improve or they forgive.

13 This implies not only listening to the words of the Quran but also having insight into their meaning and the striving thereby to implement this in one’s life. – Ed.

SECTION II

REPROACHABLE QUALITIES

CHAPTER 1



ENVY AND HOSTILITY

THE ESSENCE OF ENVY AND HOSTILITY AND THEIR FRUITS

The essence of envy (*hasad*) lies in dissatisfaction that Almighty Allah has bestowed certain blessings on someone else and in the desire that that person should be deprived of this blessing. It is one of the most despicable qualities. As for hostility (*hiqd*), at its core lie enmity, malice and the disruption of relations with others.

An envious person is one who is unjust and cruel and does not have consideration for others or leave them in peace. The chosen Prophet of Allah ﷺ stated that all sins have three fundamental qualities and counted envy among them, “Three causes are the basis of any sin, fear and avoid them. Eschew arrogance; indeed it was arrogance that impelled Iblis to disobey the will of the Lord and refuse to bow down to Adam ﷺ. Guard against strong desire; indeed, it was greediness that enticed Adam ﷺ to taste the fruit of the forbidden tree in Paradise. Beware of envy; indeed, one of the sons of Adam ﷺ, Cain (Qabil), killed his brother Abel (Habil) out of envy.”

It is known that Almighty Allah sent a revelation to the prophet Suleiman ﷺ, the son of the prophet Dawud (David) ﷺ, “Never blaspheme My pious servants and never envy any of My servants”. The statement of one of the righteous is also known, “When Almighty Allah wants to incite a ruthless enemy against a servant, He sends an envious person.”

Envy shaves religion, destroying its effect on the human heart, for it engenders darkness and forms a pall within it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed, the ills of former societies have befallen you: envy and hatred. It is a razor that shaves off, not hair, but religion.”

Thus, one of the *`arifun*¹⁴ said, “The prayers of three categories of people will not be accepted by the Almighty: those who consume that which is forbidden; those who often slander others and those whose hearts are consumed by hatred or envy towards Muslims.” The wisdom of the Creator’s rejection of their prayers lies in that they show their displeasure with the lot that Almighty Allah has determined for His servants. Perhaps the wisdom is in the displeasure of the envious one with the predestination allotted by the Almighty to His servants.

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE ENVIOUS

The companions of the Prophet ﷺ explained for us the essence of an envious person, explaining that this is one whom it is impossible to satisfy with anything. Thus, the companion Mu`awiyah ؓ noted, “It is possible to gain the goodwill of any person, except of one who is envious, because he will be satisfied only with a person’s loss of the blessings with which Almighty Allah has endowed him.” Also conveyed are the following lines belonging to Imam ash-Shafi`i ؒ:

“There is hope that all enmity may be suppressed,
except that which emanates from the envious.”

Wise people have advised us not to trouble ourselves in endeavouring to achieve a good relationship with the envious, because this is impossible. They said, “Do not tire yourself out in trying to gain the goodwill of an envious person, because he will never accept your good attitude towards him. And if you want to be secure from his harm, try to hide your affairs from him: do not show him your joy and your blessings.”

¹⁴ *`Arif* (plural – *`arifun*) is a righteous person who has achieved a high degree in the knowledge of Almighty Allah. - Ed.

CHAPTER 2

ARROGANCE

THE SOURCE OF ARROGANCE

A person's love for himself is a natural impulse that encourages self-admiration and self-satisfaction. Out of self-admiration there arise arrogance, conceit and disdain in relation to other servants of Allah. As a result, a person begins to look on others with contempt and disdain, shows no consideration of others, violates their rights, shows no respect, does not comply with agreements, does not keep promises: in general, such a person acts very oppressively towards others.

ARROGANCE - SATAN'S RUINATION

Satan (Iblis) became an outcast because of his pride and excessive self-admiration. Iblis became proud and considered that he was better than Adam عليه السلام, because he was created from fire. If a servant of Allah expresses his displeasure with theological scholars and righteous people in a similar manner, this is a primary indication that Almighty Allah made this person to be among the deprived and debased. Such a person denies himself the grace of others; this means that he will not receive any help or support from anyone. Arrogant servants of the Almighty usually say, "There is not a single righteous man or scholar left amongst us who acts in conformity with his own knowledge." The true reason for such an appraisal is that such a person sees his own reflection in others: the one who said, "Only a person who is flawed will consider others to be flawed" was right.

THE HEALING OF ARROGANCE

The feeling of pride originates in excessive love of oneself (*`ujb*). In the noble Quran, Almighty Allah mentions the pride of the human heart, followed by the cure for it. Thus, the most effective cure for self-admiration is to constantly remind oneself of one's weakness and powerlessness.

Almighty Allah says in the Quran (meaning), “And do not walk pompously on the earth,¹⁵ verily, you cannot cleave the earth nor attain its mountain heights” (Sura al-Isra, ayah 37). This ayah forbids a person from walking proudly and arrogantly. By the words “you cannot cleave the earth” is meant that a person is not able to split the earth into pieces by his own power. The words “you cannot attain its mountain heights” speak of the arrogance that a person permits himself. They are a mockery of those who are proud, as well as the reason why arrogance is prohibited. Thus, pride is profound stupidity.

A person will never derive any good through pride and arrogance. Indeed, pride is one of the ten qualities that Almighty Allah forbade in His Book (Sura al-Isra). It is also said that a haughty gait comes from arrogance. A hadith of the Prophet ﷺ says, “Whoever acts arrogantly and with haughtiness in his soul and pride in his walk, will encounter Almighty Allah angry with him on the Day of Judgment.”

CHAPTER 3

LOVE OF PROMINENCE

THE ESSENCE OF THE LOVE OF PROMINENCE

Know O seeker, by its nature the *nafs* which commands a person to do evil is naturally disposed to a love of power and high status. Thus, a person’s ego strives for superiority over others and desires that all creatures feel a need for it and should carry out all its orders. At the same time, the *nafs* wants to be absolutely independent of everyone and everything. But this is already a claim to divinity and to partnership with the Creator. Therefore, if you do not put a stop to the desires of your *nafs*, it will be like a mordacious dog that bites everyone in its path.

¹⁵ Haughty - overly proud, arrogant, self-conceited.

THE HEALING OF THE LOVE OF PROMINENCE

Know, O sincere brother, that people like us need to choose to be constantly in a state of supplication and humility: to perceive others as better than ourselves, to constantly be in need of the protection of the Creator, to seek refuge in the Almighty, to be submissive to Him and to fulfill the duties of a servant (*'ubudiya*) before the Creator. We must keep within the boundaries established by the Shari`a and follow the highly respected *Sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ, try to possess the proper intention when doing good deeds, persevere in cleansing our inner world, strive to improve behavior, be aware of our shortcomings, acknowledge the power sins have over ourselves, as well as to shun popularity and veneration by others by all means. Thus, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There is already ample evil for a person when others point to him because of his religion or worldly life. The only one excepted is one whom Almighty Allah has saved."

Our master Imam Ibn Mashish رحمه الله said, "Protect your heart from excessive love for worldly wealth, women, love of prominence and perverse passions. Be content with what Almighty Allah has endowed you."

And do not let your *nafs* ever deceive you with its cunning and make you think that your love and striving for high status arise from the helping of religion and a desire to exalt the word of Almighty Allah. The matter of religion is the work of Almighty Allah. He will sustain and exalt it, because the All-Powerful Lord took upon Himself the obligation to preserve it. The Almighty said (meaning), "They want to extinguish the light of Allah with words of their lips, that is, to refute and destroy His Shari`a and arguments. However, Allah will certainly reveal and preserve His light – the Shari`a – no matter how hateful it may be to the non-believer" (Sura at-Tawbah, ayah 32). This means that, through their words, abusive and unjust people want to destroy the Shari`a (the law of Allah) as well as His arguments which demonstrate the Almightyness of the Lord. However, Almighty Allah will certainly preserve the light (*nur*) of the wise Shari`a, no matter how much non-believers oppose it.

CHAPTER 4

ANGER

THE CAUSE OF ANGER

Know, O Muslims, that people get angry because they are veiled from the fact that God Almighty is the Doer of everything that occurs in the universe and because of their supposition that their every act is done by themselves.

A person's *nafs* has two qualities which exist in him from birth: the first is desire, the second is anger. Desire gives rise to greediness, lust, eagerness, long-term aspirations, love of worldly life and other similar qualities. And anger gives rise to arrogance, self-importance, enmity, envy, hatred and other such infamous qualities. However, it is actually desire and anger that protect a *nafs*. This is because desire brings benefits and anger protects one from dangers. Therefore, complete riddance of these characteristic features from the *nafs* will not lead one to perfection; on the contrary, it will cause insufficiency. However, if these two qualities predominate in the soul they will certainly entail harm and deficiency in one's mind and faith (*iman*). Therefore, it is necessary to train the human *nafs* in such a balanced way as to achieve proportionality between these two extremes - this is the main principle of the Sufi path (*tariqa*) of Ahmad ؒ, may Almighty Allah sanctify the secrets of its people. By following this path, contemptible designations will be transformed into praiseworthy qualities: instead of desire, love for Allah appears, self-restraint replaces lust and greediness develops into zeal for the prescriptions of the Almighty. In similar fashion, this occurs with the rest of the reproachable qualities of the *nafs*.

REFLECTION OF DEEDS IN VARIOUS VISIONS

All a person's actions and morals are concentrated in his *nafs* and held in the heart and constitute the essence of his inner world. They appear in al-Barzakh¹⁶ in various forms and images. As they

¹⁶ Al-Barzakh is an otherworldly, invisible world where, after death, the souls of people remain until the Day of Judgment. - Ed.

can emanate from both the Divine Nur (light) and from darkness, it is necessary to know their various types. These images can be recognized in several ways. Thus, if a person is dominated by a strong love (for Almighty Allah) and desire (for His contentment), this manifests itself in dreams as glorification (*tasbih*), remembrance of the Almighty (*dhikr*), worship, obedience to the Creator, justice, sincerity and the fear of God and maybe as images of fruits pleasant to the taste (apple, grapes, watermelon) or precious stones, heavenly maidens, servants - that is, in the form of beautiful and sublime representations. However, if lust or the power of anger prevails in a person, then he sees in his dreams images of animals such as a pig, a snake, a bull, etc. If a person is overcome with pride, this is reflected in dreams in the form of animals such as lions, tigers, cheetahs and other predators. And when a person is possessed by greed and miserliness, this is reflected in his dreams in the form of scorpions, spiders and other such creatures. A person may see all these images both in dreams and in reality.

A person who has embarked on the path of self-betterment (*salik*) and when in the early stages of the struggle with his *nafs*, sees himself in a dream as opposing beasts, animals and insects of enormous size. But as a person works on his inner self, these decrease in scale and become insignificant, like flies and mosquitoes. This is the proof that he is fighting with his *nafs*, annihilating it through constant self-education - first by destroying its most destructive aspects, and then proceeding to the elimination of the lesser ones.

HOW TO BEHAVE IF CONSUMED WITH ANGER

When a servant of Almighty Allah is overcome by a state of anger, he should never transgress the bounds of truth and justice. On the contrary, it is necessary to follow the instruction of the Prophet ﷺ, "If one of you begins to be angry, let him remain silent." An angry person needs to perform a minor ablution, for anger is like fire and only water is capable of extinguishing it, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ also indicated.

A person who begins to be overcome with rage must guard against this state pushing him to doing that which is reproachable. After all, this can lead to grievous consequences - to violation of the boundaries of truth and justice. And let him remember the words of the Prophet ﷺ, “There are three qualities that rescue a person and the same number of qualities that entail destruction. The saving qualities are: fear of God both manifest and hidden (i.e., whilst among people and when alone); uttering the word of truth both in states of peace and anger and also moderation (whether one be wealthy or poor). The destructive qualities are: surrender to avarice; pursuit of desires and admiration of one’s own opinion” (according to another narration - “admiration of oneself”).

In summing up the above, we note that it is necessary for servants of Allah to conform their moral disposition in accordance with that of the Almighty. This was also stated by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, “Assume the moral disposition of Allah.” Just as Almighty Allah does not get angry for His own sake, so a person should not be angry and take revenge for his own sake. If the Supreme Creator were angry for His own sake, He would destroy all of His creations in an instant.

CHAPTER 5

SLANDER AND GOSSIP

THE ESSENCE OF SLANDER AND GOSSIP

Know, may Allah grant you His assistance, that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Slander is one’s referring to a person using words that he does not like.” When the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was asked, “Oh Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and what if what I say is really an aspect of the person?” He answered, “If what you say is innate in him, then you have blasphemed, and if it is absent in him then you have slandered him.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Slander, backbiting and false accusation (*buhtan*) are great sins, which are even worse than backbiting (*ghiba*) in severity.

As for tale-bearing (*namima*), this is the spreading among people of information that causes disturbance and discord. The Perfect Shari`a strictly forbade gossip, for the Prophet ﷺ said, “The most hated of you to the Almighty and Great Allah, are those who spread gossip, thereby fomenting discord and disturbance (*fitna*) among people.”

THE DANGER OF SLANDER AND GOSSIP

Truly, slander and gossip are reproachable qualities. This is spiritual filth, the presence of which makes it impossible for a person to approach Almighty Allah, just as it is impossible to approach Him in the presence of physical uncleanness in worship. And in order for a *murid* who has embarked on the path of knowing the Lord to be accorded the salvation and contentment of Allah, it is imperative to rid oneself of reproachable qualities and cleanse one’s *nafs*. Almighty Allah said this (meaning), “Indeed he who cleansed his *nafs* has found great happiness.” (Sura ash-Shams, ayah 9) Truly, backbiting and gossip are among the most dangerous obstacles preventing a *murid* from implementing what is good and closing for him the doors of acceptance by Almighty Allah.

Theological scholars pay special attention to slander, to looking for others’ faults, commenting on others’ shortcomings and the demeaning of their dignity, as this invokes the Creator’s anger at a *murid*, thus causing all the actions of the servant to be in vain. That is why the spiritual mentors of the *tariqah* (*murshid*) warn against spreading rumors about the misconduct of one’s brothers. After all, it is possible that the condemned conduct of a *murid* was predetermined by Almighty Allah in order to fill a gap in the religion of this servant which arose from showing off or arrogance. And, perhaps, thanks to sincere repentance of this behaviour, the *murid* will achieve perfection. The words of Ibn Ataillah ؒ also confirm this, “Wrongdoing which has led to humility and a remorseful breakdown of one’s *nafs*, is better than obedience which causes a person to feel pride and arrogance.”

STATEMENTS CONCERNING SLANDER AND GOSSIP

Valuable statements have reached us from close servants of Allah, warning and explaining to the *murid* all the harm, danger and abomination of slander. Here are some of these statements, which are given so that the inattentive might take heed and the ignorant might learn:

1. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Of all the possible harm a person might inflict, it would be enough if he mocked and demeaned his brother in faith, as a Muslim’s blood, property and honour are sacrosanct.”

2. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Eschew slander – truly, it is worse than adultery (*zina*). For you see, a person who has committed adultery may soon repent before the Almighty, and Allah, the Perfect and Great, may accept his repentance. But, as for a gossip, Allah will not forgive him until he has received forgiveness from the one he has maltreated.”

3. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “A gossip will not enter Paradise.”

4. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Should I tell you about those who are the worst servants of Allah?” The companions answered, “Yes, O Messenger of Allah.” Then he ﷺ said, “They are those who spread gossip and sow discord among those who love one another and those who are eager to blame the innocent.”

5. The Prophet ﷺ said, “For him who sheds off the garments of bashfulness the question of talking behind one’s back does not arise (i.e. to tell the truth about a person who openly indulges in sins is not slander).”

6. He ﷺ also said, “To speak the truth about the reprobate (*fasiq*)¹⁸ is not slander.”

7. One of the righteous stated, “He who slanders others is like one who has set up a catapult and hurls his good deeds to the west and east with it.”

¹⁸ *Fasiq* - someone who clearly commit serious sins.

8. They asked Sufyan ath-Thawri ؓ about the meaning of the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, “Verily God loathes the family of the flesh-eaters.” He explained these words in the following way, “They are the ones who slander; they eat people’s flesh.”

9. It was told to Hasan al-Basri ؓ that, “So-and-so has spoken badly of you.” To which this righteous man sent a tray of sweets to his detractor with the following message, “I have learnt that you bestowed upon me your good deeds, so I decided to repay you with whatever I could.”

10. When slander was mentioned in the presence of Ibn Mubarak ؓ, he said, “If I were to slander anyone, I would slander my parents, because they are the most deserving of my good deeds.”

11. Imam Ibn Ataillah ؓ said, “If you want to gauge a person’s mentality, pay attention to how he behaves when someone is mentioned. Thus, if you find he dwells on his faults, remarking something like “Forget him, he did this or that badly,” you should know that such a person is lacking in knowledge and his inner world is in ruins - because true believers try to protect the honour of a brother in faith.”

One of the Arab poets said:

“The wounds from a knife sooner or later heal
but a wound from a word lasts forever.”

HOW TO ACT IF SLANDER IS COMMITTED

Know that one who has slandered must recite the *Suras al-Fatiha*, *al-Ikhlās*, *al-Falaq* and *an-Nas* and assign the reward for the reading to the person whom he has maltreated. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to one of the righteous in a dream with such an admonition. The righteous one said, “Truly, on the Day of Judgement, when a person stands before Almighty Allah with the sin of slander and the reward for reading these Suras, we hope that this reward will become a sort of expiation for the sin.”

A wise person should not be offended by slander against him. Indeed, Allah forgives half the sins of one who has become the object of slander. It is not appropriate for a *murid* to be friendly with those who praise their own actions while at the same time condemning others. Truly, as righteous people have said, the *nafs* and inner world of such people are ruined. Indeed, he who has been a witness to the commitment of slander against an absent brother in faith must not remain indifferent. On the contrary, it is necessary to support and defend a person rebuked by others, because in this situation maintaining silence also constitutes the humiliation of a Muslim brother. After all, one of a Muslim's main obligations is the defense of a brother in faith from gossip and slander. Yahya bin Mu`adh ar-Razi ؒ said, "Let there be three benefits from you to your Muslim brother: if you cannot be helpful to him, then at least do not harm him; if you cannot bring him joy, then at least do not distress him and if you cannot praise him, at least do not find fault with him."

They say that once Ibrahim ibn Adham ؒ went to a feast at someone's invitation and there he heard one of the guests saying the following words about another who was absent, "He really is obese and that is why he walks so slowly." On hearing this, Ibrahim ibn Adham ؒ immediately left that house even though he had not eaten for three days. Afterwards he said, "I will never remain where someone allows himself to slander a believer." Another time, Ibn Adham ؒ himself invited people to visit and when everyone started the meal, some of the guests started to slander someone. Ibrahim ibn Adham ؒ then said, "The peoples who lived before us first ate bread - and then meat. As for you, you first eat meat¹⁹ and only afterwards bread." After which he refused to eat with them.

One of the good traditions of all the righteous was to be responsible for the defense of brothers in faith if they became objects of slander. Striving for the satisfaction of Allah, they did not condone the blaming of brothers in faith until they found at least some justification for such actions. For example, if someone pronounced words about theological scholars or the poor such as, "How proud this person is! He never accepts invitations to

19 In the Quran, Almighty Allah likened a man engaged in blasphemy to eating the flesh of his brother, pointing to the abomination of this sin. This is implied by Ibrahim ibn Adham ؒ. - Ed.

any celebration, even to a wedding!” the righteous justified this in this way, “Truly, he refuses an invitation only because he intends to belittle his *nafs* or out of intense shyness.” Those who are possessors of happiness, when they see a person committing a reprehensible act, outwardly express disagreement with him, while in their heart they turn to Allah with a prayer for him. There are wretched people in such cases, who as a punishment in their maliciousness, denounce a person who has so strayed and try to tarnish his honour. The believer, however, instructs his brother in faith in private and conceals his brother’s shortcomings in public - and not the opposite way.

CHAPTER 6

LOVE FOR WORLDLY THINGS

The worldly is the enemy of man. Know that love for the worldly life (*dunya*) is condemned in all the Shari`as (divine laws) and is the basis of all offences and the cause of all distress. Thus, it is necessary for a servant of Allah to renounce worldly pleasures and comfort and free his heart of the striving and love for a high position in society. Truly, the love of high position is more harmful to man than the love of wealth. The presence of both of these qualities in a person shows his love for the goods of the worldly life which are the enemy of man.

To make clear all the contempt and stench of this fleeting world, it is enough to give the following example. When Almighty Allah brought the prophet Adam عليه السلام and his wife Hawa (Eve) from Paradise to the earth, they - having ceased to smell Paradise - lost consciousness from the stench of this mortal world. They remained in this unconscious state for forty days.

It is also reported that when Almighty Allah created this world, He addressed it thus: “O mortal world, serve the one who serves Me and whoever serves you, turn them into your servants!” When we talk of the comforts of this world, we mean wealth, property, food, speech and sleep. And you, O *murid*, guard against your heart being occupied with any evanescent havens. And know that worldly

retreats are akin to hair growing in the heart - if just a single hair grows in a person's heart, he will die immediately. That is why, by the will of Almighty Allah, human hair grows on the surface of the skin and not otherwise. From this one understands the wisdom that believers enter Paradise without hair on their bodies and faces, with tinted antimony eyes and identical hearts, without envy and hatred of each other. And if hair grew on their bodies, this would lead to death, because their bodies and souls are inwardly transformed and they have no curtain or barrier from their Lord.

Know that to the degree a *murid* may love the delights of worldly life, so to the same degree will he be abhorrent to Allah. After all, everything that distracts one from Allah has to do with worldly life (*dunya*) and everything that furthers one's turning to Almighty Allah has to do with the eternal life (*akhirah*).

In a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ it is said, "Indeed, Allah did not make a creation more hateful to Him than the mundane world. Allah never once looked at it²⁰ after He created it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said, "This transitory world and everything in it is cursed, except for the remembrance of Allah and all that leads towards it."

WORSHIPPING WITH LOVE OF THE WORLD IS MERE FATIGUE OF THE LIMBS

Imam Abul-Hasan ash-Shazali ؒ stated, "A servant's association with Almighty Allah cannot be complete in this or other worlds as long as he has a partiality to either of them. Approach to the Almighty can be awarded only to a servant of Allah who is sincere in worship.

The others will remain with whatever their heart was inclined towards in this and the other world; they will not ascend any higher."

From Abul-Hasan Ali ibn al-Mazin ؒ it is transmitted, "Even if you praise a person highly and attribute to him the high level of *siddiq*, Almighty Allah will still not pay him attention as long as in the heart of that servant there is even some love at all for worldly life. I swear

²⁰ As something that has value to Him. - Ed.

by Allah, those travelers on the path of knowing the Almighty who in their hearts felt the sweetness of any material wealth perished.”

Imam ash-Shazali رحمته الله said, “The worship of Allah, if associated with worldly pleasures and comfort, is mere occupation of the heart and fatigue for the body; such worship is like a spiritless image. The essence of asceticism and estrangement from worldly goods lies in the abandonment of interest in them and not in renouncing them altogether, for the Sharia does not forbid trade and craftsmanship.”

ADMONITION CONCERNING THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE WORLDLY LIFE

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ often reminded believers of the reality which should never vacate their hearts and minds. People should be in this world as though they were travelers. This is a reminder to protect them from being entangled in the net of love for worldly life. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Be in this world as though you were from a foreign land (*gharib*) or travelers. And also consider yourself to be amongst those who have left this world. Thus, when morning comes, do not tell your *nafs* about the evening (do not expect that you will live to see it), and when evening comes, do not talk about tomorrow morning. Use your health before the onset of illness, your youth before old age, your spare time before you are occupied and your life before death. Truly, you do not know how they will call you tomorrow.”²¹

When Imam Junaid al-Baghdadi رحمته الله was asked: “What knowledge is the most useful?” he replied, “Knowledge that leads you to the knowing of Almighty Allah and which distances you from following your *nafs*.” Useful knowledge is such that leads its possessor to modesty, to a constant struggle with his *nafs*, patronage over secret hopes, to self-control of the outward, to fear before Almighty Allah and to the heart’s disinclination for worldly goods and those who strive for them. Such knowledge teaches us to be content with the small things in this world, to shun those who are enthralled with the worldly, to leave the goods of the mortal world to its dwellers,

²¹ That is, you do not know whether they will remember you tomorrow as being among the living or the dead. - Ed.

to be a sincere mentor and adviser to others, to display the best disposition in your attitude towards them, to associate with the poor (*fuqara*), to honour those beloved of Almighty Allah (*awliya* or spiritual mentors) and engage in what concerns him.

Ali ibn Abu Talib ؑ warned believers against having long-term aspirations and about pursuing their desires, as they are fruits of love for the transient world. He said, “I fear for you for two reasons: long-term aspirations and pursuit of desires. Therefore, be the sons of the eternal life and not the sons of the transient world.”

STATEMENTS BY THE RIGHTEOUS ABOUT THE MORTAL WORLD

Those who have knowledge and the righteous have proficiently explained the essence of the *dunya* and cautioned about its affliction, seduction and tribulation. Here are some of their statements that bear blessings for everyone.

1. Imam Junaid al-Baghdadi ؑ said: “Whoever starts the morning complaining of the constrained circumstances of his life is like one complaining about his Lord. And whoever is plunged into a state of dejection because of worldly concerns and tribulations, is as if angry with Almighty Allah. And whoever humbles himself before a rich man because of his wealth has lost two-thirds of his religion.”

2. One of the theological scholars said, “When Almighty Allah wants to choose someone as His favourite (*wali*), He makes this world despicable to him.”

3. One of the spiritual mentors also said, “O *murid*, of all the goods of the transient world, keep for yourself only as much as you really require so that you do not have to ask others - do not abnegate too much in renouncing this world entirely.”

4. One of the sheikhs stated, “There are two special qualities and when a servant observes them, soon he will become an imam, followed by people: turning away from the *dunya*, and being tolerant of harm from brothers in faith, with unselfishness.”

5. Imam ash-Shazali رحمته الله noted, “Almighty Allah will not love His servant until he comes to hate this mortal world and those chasing after it, renouncing the comforts of both worlds.”

6. Imam ash-Shazali رحمته الله also noted, “Everyone who loves this *dunya* is hated by Almighty Allah, therefore a *murid* must repel it from his hand and heart.”

Know, O Muslims, that this world is a passing shadow and a barrier between the servant and his Lord. A person is not regarded as a true servant of Almighty Allah, as long as in his heart there be an atom’s weight of love for this mortal world. Indeed, he will not be accepted by the Creator until he completely renounces its innermost and outermost.

SECTION III

RESPECTFUL QUALITIES

CHAPTER 1



SERVITUDE

THE ESSENCE OF SERVITUDE TO THE LORD

Know that servitude (*'ubudiyya*) is to acknowledge one's powerlessness (to do anything good or to abstain from anything bad) and admission that all power and favour is given by Almighty Allah,²² which is the embracing of what you have been commanded and the departure from what you are forbidden to do.

Theological scholars differ as to the definition of the essence of servitude but all are of united opinion that to be a true servant of the Almighty means to recognize the omnipotence and dominion of Allah (*rububiyya*). For all the qualities of human servitude and all the qualities of the Creator's dominion are polar opposites. That is, a servant of Allah is given qualities opposite to each divine attribute (*sifat*) particular only to the Almighty. Thus, for example, Almighty Allah has omnipotence, while a servant of Allah is given weakness; Allah has pride and magnificence, while a servant is given lowliness and insignificance - and so on.

Definitions of human servitude to Almighty Allah were also given by the great righteous.

1. The prophet Isa عليه السلام said, "Servitude is abandoning disputation, tolerating affliction and loving the Lord."

2. Dhul-Nun al-Misri رحمته الله said, "Servitude means being a servant to Allah in all situations, just as He is your Lord in all situations" confirmatory to the words of the Prophet ﷺ, "No servant is more honourable to God Almighty than a servant who worships Him in all circumstances."

²² That is, the performance of any sort of good deed and abstinence from that which is reproachable is not considered to be due to a person's own merit but through the special mercy and support of Almighty Allah. - Ed.

3. Some theological scholars have stated that, “Servitude is (a state of) not seeing one’s worship in the witness of God.”

4. It was also said, “Servitude has four characteristics: fulfilling covenants, conforming to (Shari`a) boundaries, contentment with what is present, and patience for the lost.”

SIGNS OF SERVITUDE TO ALLAH

Servitude has its own signs, and among these are surrendering of measures and witnessing predestination, as a servant should be pleased with the choice of Allah.

It is said that Ibrahim ibn Adham ؑ, having bought a servant, asked him:

“What do you usually eat?”

“That which you will feed me,” answered the servant.

“What kind of work do you do?”

“The one you will require of me.”

“What do you want?”

“Does the desire of a servant have any meaning when there is the will of his master?”

Then Ibrahim ibn Adham ؑ addressed himself to his *nafs* and said, “O poor man, even for an hour of your life you have not been as submissive to Allah as this servant is in submitting himself to you!”

Imam Ali ibn al-Khawwas ؑ when mentoring his *murid* ash-Sha`rani ؑ said to him, “From what Almighty Allah sends down to you, eat only as much as necessary and no more and give the rest to whomever Almighty Allah wishes. Do not exert efforts in managing your affairs but rather ask the Creator to organise them in the best way.” Then ash-Sha`rani ؑ asked him, “But should I ask the Almighty for the sustenance which is permitted?” To which his mentor answered, “Yes, ask in the following way: O my Allah, send me down sustenance to be grateful for, bless me in it, and cover my flaws in both worlds, O Most Generous, O Most Noble!” and added, “Abstain from impatience and anxiety in undergoing the tests of

Allah. After all, the Creator will endow a servant who consigns all his affairs to Allah with the necessary knowledge and relevant actions, so much so that such a servant of Allah will certainly become an imam who people will follow. Truly, Allah is powerful over everything.”

Among the signs of servitude is also a servant’s not noticing the impact of poverty in its privation or the mark of wealth in its abundance. All conditions must be considered to be equal by a servant of Allah. He also should constrain his *nafs* and be resolved on its self-control, be accommodative to people and neither resort to nor seek pleasure. Scholars say that, “A person remains a true servant of Allah until he seeks a servant for himself. However, when he begins to search for a servant for himself, he falls beyond the border of servitude to God and abandons its *adab*.”

Servitude has an etiquette whereby a person should not be anxious in regard to the following circumstances: in hunger, baredness, poverty and humiliation. A servant should not repudiate any of Allah’s predeterminations but dutifully accept them. That is to say, the truly submissive must rely solely on the Almighty’s mercy: do not put anything aside in reserve and do not turn in need to anyone other than Almighty Allah.

And it is said that the *murid* is like a ruler in his dignity and as a humiliated servant in his modesty and the *murid* will not be a *murid* until he is the bearer of harm from all creatures in honour of the One whose servants are they. And the more the servant’s knowledge increases, the greater his neediness of his Lord and the higher his zeal. And it was said that one’s concern in worship should not be in earning rewards and benefits but nothing other than closeness to the Almighty, for if God bestows you with closeness, there will be the rewards and bigger than that. Then Allah will shower you with blessings so that you may extend favor to others also.

Servitude (*‘ubudiyya*) is an inseparable quality of a servant of the Almighty, just as Dominion (*rububiyya*) is the inseparable and permanent attribute of the Perfect Almighty Allah. He whose destitution before God does not increase though his knowledge and acts and in modesty towards creation falls into spiritual perdition.

One who is content with his wealth is in reality poor, one who is satisfied with a high position is contemptible, one who is content with his kinsfolk is debased and one who is satisfied with his good deeds is bankrupt. But one who is content with Almighty Allah is truly rich.

PERCEIVING ONESELF AS INFERIOR TO EVERY COMPANION

Truly, worship is the finality of humiliation and submission, with a feeling of weakness and destitution and demonstration of submission and compliance and perpetual supplication and request. Humiliation is achieved by submissiveness of the heart, its surrender and its admission of weakness and impoverishment and this submission is the basis of heartfelt worship.

For a person who perceives himself as worse than anyone else around him, the whole world becomes as a sheikh-spiritual guide. For nothing has been created in the universe, which does not have a characteristic quality which is not found in other creatures. And the one who has reached this level observes it and studies it and tries to arm himself with its wisdom and becomes affected by its character. From a sinner, for example, he may learn humility and patience to troubles which Almighty Allah has sent down to him, until it is relieved. And from a dog that accompanies him, he learns to bear harshness and the absence of worldly things except to fill its stomach and satisfaction with its master in receiving even decayed bones and learns from it the maintenance of friendliness to everyone who does it any good. The obedient servant learns submissiveness and patience even from a stone which it shows when they cut it from a mountain with iron and trim it to the necessary shape and then lay it below the lowest walls of a latrine. And from the donkey and the camel a servant of Allah adopts the kind of patience that these creatures show while carrying loads or their master. Thus also, in watching a rooster, a sincere worshiper learns, for example, the attentiveness, jealousy and generosity that it shows to its family. And when a servant observes the flame of a candle and sees how its wick burns, he gleans the following wisdom from it: how much light it provides to those nearby and how patiently it endures the torment of the fire while it benefits those around it.

One who considers himself to be worse than everyone else will be a companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The benefit of such a perception is that such a person will not react offensively to someone who has treated him rudely. Among its benefits also is the submission to creation in all the levels of perfection they claim. No one knows the secrets of others except Allah and those whom the Almighty has endowed with such knowledge. If we are told by someone of his secrets we trust him, and our refutation of him is hypocrisy, even the peak of hypocrisy.

Imam Afzaluddin ربه، while mentoring Imam ash-Sha`rani ربه، advised him thus, “When you attend any gathering or visit some sick amongst the righteous avoid taking a place of honour, even if it be vacant. For if a senior person enters, they may move you and embarrass you. You will be abashed and your *nafs* will certainly show its displeasure. Know this and practice it. This can only be achieved when you perceive yourself as being inferior to all around you.”

EXONERATION OF ONE’S SOUL AND CENSURE FROM THE CREATED ARE CONTRADICTORY TO SERVITUDE

Know, O Muslims, that a clear sign of a *murid*’s ignorance of his *nafs* is his exculpation of its attributed qualities, be they praiseworthy or condemnable. For, if he truly knew his *nafs*, he would know that the praiseworthy and reproachable qualities that are manifested in other sinner Muslims – and even in the righteous servants of Allah – from time to time appear and disappear within him. For a servant of Allah is like a firmament in which, like clouds of varying form, there float both meritorious and censurable qualities: that is, in man there is each and every quality in both these categories.

Know that all the characteristics dispersed in creation, even the blameworthy, are present in every servant in their entirety and in their perfection except in the prophets (truly, Almighty Allah cleansed their natural dispositions). As for all the other righteous and ordinary Muslims alike, they have not attained completeness in natural purity. Verily Almighty Allah prevents reproachable qualities from activating in them. So long as a true worshipper is embraced

by the grace of the Almighty, all of the praiseworthy qualities are manifested and the reproachable ones are inactivated. But when the Almighty's grace falls away from a servant, then praiseworthy qualities will be thwarted and reproachable ones will be activated and on seeing such a person people will say, "O our Allah, deliver us from his evil!" and "O people, just look at how gloomy this person's face is!"

If a servant realizes this truth, he will not censure another of Allah's servants and will not show his discontentment for the destiny the Creator deals him. Sheikh Abdul-Qadir al-Dashtuti رحمته الله recounted, "Once I scolded a man who did not fully observe a pause when bowing at the waist in prayer before prostration. And he responded, "O my brother, I am completely in the grip of Almighty Allah! And if He wills, He will also lengthen or shorten my pause in prayer. I look not at what is being moved, but on Him who moves." And then the sheikh added, "Never condemn anything except that which destroys religion."

YOU ARE A SERVANT OF THAT WHICH OCCUPIES YOUR HEART

Ubudiyya means servitude and captivity. A person is a servant to that which prevails over him and preoccupies his heart. If a person is in the captivity of his *nafs*, then he is the servant of his *nafs*, and if he is in the captivity of the worldly, then he is a servant of the worldly. And there is no doubt that a *murid* whose worship is inextricably linked with love for the worldly is merely distracting his heart and exhausting his limbs. For such worship, even though it be abundant, is insignificant before Almighty Allah. It is like a body without a soul; only an appearance. Nowadays, most people engage themselves in the pursuit of the worldly and afterwards stand at night in worship. Therefore, if vigilant nights and abundant worship cannot progress the sons of the worldly closer to Allah, how about minimal worship done with love for the worldly and committing some sins?

A monotheist believer devotes himself to only Almighty Allah or to those, loyalty to whom constitutes loyalty to the Creator. The

merit of a worshiper is defined by whom or what he worships, just as the value of a knowledgeable person depends on the subject of his knowledge.

SUPPLICATION IS WORSHIP

The essence of servitude and its radiant quintessence is revealed in supplication. For it is precisely during prayer that a servant reveals the utmost degree of his powerlessness, his helplessness and destitution, awaiting the boundless mercy, generosity and allotment from his Lord. As declared above, true servitude is the renunciation of any might and strength and the recognition of the Almighty in favours and gratitude.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Prayer is the brain of worship.” Another version says, “Prayer is worship.” That is, the Prophet ﷺ summarised worship and defined supplication as its essence. This is because the reality of worship is self-abasement and submissiveness and it is obtained through supplication with the greatest possible and most explicit manifestation.

QUALITIES WHICH IMPEDE TRUE WORSHIP

Know that the qualities that hinder a person from approaching Almighty Allah, even in *namaz* prayer,²³ are divided into four categories: divine, demonic, bestial and predatory.

- Divine qualities are imitations of the attributes of Almighty Allah, the assumption of which by man in their entirety He forbade. To such qualities belong: pursuit of glory, aspiring to supremacy, the lack of need for anyone or anything, the desire to have dominion over people and the feeling of being superior to any other Muslim.

- Demonic qualities are taking after the qualities of Satan such as: envy, transgression, abundance of guile and deception, treachery, hypocrisy, as well as an inclination towards people of innovation and deviation.

²³ Namaz - the daily prayers obligatory for every Muslim.

- Bestial qualities are gluttony and a strong desire to satisfy lust and amorousness on account of which their possessor falls into the sins of adultery and theft.

- Predatory qualities are unjust anger and malevolence. Due to the presence of these qualities, a person is capable of committing a grave sin forbidden by Allah - the killing of another person, as well as the infliction of injuries and damage.

A human soul is initially subjugated by bestial qualities. As he grows and his comprehension increases, predatory qualities also manifest themselves. Then when his thoughts consolidate and he is not assisted by Allah, he starts to employ his mind in cunning and deceit and seeks the assistance of Satan, who, then insinuates into him divine characteristics and will try with all his powers to prompt the wayward in his striving to acquire qualities innate only to Allah. He who adopts a single manner of the qualities of Satan, will be ousted by Allah from His presence and he who has been cast out from His presence will be overcome by his enemies, as if God is saying to Satan and its army, “You have no access to the people close to Me, but have free hand over everyone who has left my Presence.”

Allah said to Satan, “Go, and of whomsoever follows you, surely Hell will be the recompense of you all – ample recompense. And entice with your (seductive) voice²⁴ those of them whom you can, make assaults on them with your cavalry and your infantry and be a partner in their wealth and children, and make promises to them.” But Satan promises them nothing but deceit. (Sura al-Isra, ayat 63–64) There is a great threat in these words, for the meaning of the words of Almighty Allah “be their partner in their wealth and children” is to encourage them to acquire possessions in a forbidden way and to spend them in illicit ways and also to have children by engendering them in forbidden ways. The words “and make promises to them” mean making false promises. The Almighty further said, “But Satan promises them only that which is false”, meaning that Satan embellishes the mistake by deceiving that it is proper.

24 i.e. with songs, music, and any other call for Allah’s disobedience.

In a hadith it is said that when Satan was cast down on earth, he asked, "O Lord, You cast me down on this earth and damned me and deprived me of Your grace. And now, where will my house be?" The Almighty replied, "Your house is a latrine." Then Iblis asked, "And where will I hold my gatherings?" And Almighty Allah replied, "In markets and places where people gather on the road." Iblis asked again, "And what will I eat?" The Almighty answered, "All that over which the Name of Almighty Allah is not mentioned." Then Iblis requested, "Make a drink for me." To that the Almighty said, "All that makes one intoxicated." Iblis again requested, "Make me a *muezzin*." The Almighty said, "Flutes." Then Iblis asked again, "Make me a *quran*." And the Almighty said, "Poetry." Iblis asked, "And will I have my own writing?" To this the Almighty replied, "Tattooing." Iblis continued, "And can You make *hadith* for me?" The Almighty said, "Falsehoods." Then Iblis asked, "And will I have a messenger?" The Almighty said, "Soothsayers." Iblis asked, "Give me snares." To this the Almighty replied, "Women."

FRUITS OF SERVITUDE TO THE ALMIGHTY

Acknowledge your weakness and the Almighty will furnish you with His strength and power. Recognize your poverty and the Creator will help you with His riches. For one who affirms his sincere need of Allah will gain the greatest wealth; that is the absence of need of anything or anyone other than Almighty Allah. After all, there is no salvation and refuge for a servant except for Almighty Allah. He who has achieved the attributes of servitude will be furnished with divine attributes (*rububiyyah*), especially if the servant remains persistent in remembering Allah (*dhikr*), which is a magnet of servitude.

When a person yearns to be called a servant in the Divine Presence, Allah extends to him divine attributes. And the lowest of that is the witness of the quick favour from the Most Subtle, because for him who is consistent in servitude, neediness, instability and poverty, gifts are quickened. Whoever wants talents to be rushed to him, let him achieve poverty. Almighty Allah said in the Quran (meaning), "Verily, alms are intended for the needy" (Sura at-Tawbah, ayah 60) That is, the more Allah endows with favours

those who have attained spiritual perfection, the more the display of their servitude before the Almighty is strengthened and the more their inner faith is strengthened, the closer they become to their Creator. For people of perfection, the more favours are increased, the more they increase in servitude, and the more they increase in religion, the closer to Almighty they become, and the more they increase in status and honour, the more they increase in modesty and humiliation – humble towards the believers, stern against the disbelievers.

Whenever people who have achieved a high degree of spiritual perfection avail themselves of what their *nafs* desires, they express sincere gratitude to it for this. Sometimes the righteous partake in what their *nafs* desires. Sometimes, they consume what their *nafs* desires out of pity to it, for it is with them like a child who is softened by giving it some presents.

At other times such people deprive their *nafs* of what they want, following the prophets and their choice of reducing worldly enjoyments.

CHAPTER 2

CONTENTMENT, OBEDIENCE AND ENTRUSTING

THE ESSENCE OF CONTENTMENT WITH THE LORD, COMPLETE SURRENDER TO HIM (TASLIM) AND ENTRUSTING OF ALL YOUR AFFAIRS TO HIM (TAFWIZ)

Know that contentment is that you do not object to the divine decree and predestination of Allah and not that you do not experience trials. Know that it is binding on a servant that he be satisfied only with the destiny with which he has been commanded to be satisfied, because it is not possible nor necessary that he be satisfied with all parts of his destiny, such as acts of disobedience, for instance. Contentment is tranquility of the heart with His ordinances and conformance of the heart with what pleases God and what He chooses for one. Among the signs of contentment are: having no preference before a decree has been decided, feeling no bitterness

after the decree has been decided and feeling stirrings of love in the very midst of trials. Whoever is satisfied with God as Lord attains the sweetness of faith and he who has any value for worldly pleasure in his heart does not attain it. There are two kinds of contentment: contentment with Him, the Most High, and contentment with what proceeds from the Almighty, Glory be to Him.

Contentment with Him is that one be satisfied with Him as Arranger (of one's affairs), and satisfaction with what proceeds from Him concerns whatever He decrees. One who is content with God Almighty is one who does not object to His decree and whoever relies on the good choice of God Almighty for him will not wish for other than what God Almighty has chosen for him.

As for *tafwiz* and *taslim*, these are the renunciation of choice. *Taslim*, *islam* and *istislam* are words sharing a single meaning, i.e. submission and the manifestation of servitude. *Tafwiz* is the rejection of choice regarding any matters of worldly life, complete trust in one's Lord and the rejection of all that is in contradiction to His choice. It is said that *tafwiz* takes place before the fulfillment of the destiny and submission (*taslim*) after it. *Tafwiz* and *taslim* are among the attributes of those who attain the knowledge of Allah.

THE MERIT OF BEING CONTENT WITH THE DECREE OF ALLAH

Contentment is the joy of the heart with everything that happens according to the decree of Allah, however bitter it may be. This is why a person is bestowed a great reward for being contented with all of Almighty Allah's decisions. It is narrated that on the Day of Judgment a herald of the Almighty will summon thus, "Where are the pure ones, chosen from My servants?" Then the angels will ask, "Who are they, Your chosen servants?" The Almighty will answer, "They are the servants who were content with My gifts and were content with My predestinations."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Almighty Allah addressed the prophet Musa ؑ thus, 'You will not come close to Me with anything more beloved for Me than contentment with My decree.'"

Imam Abul-Hasan ash-Shazali rahimahullah bequeathed to us, “Flee from all your own choices to the choice of Almighty Allah. Truly, one who has chosen something for himself does not know whether he will receive it or not. If he receives it, he does not know whether he will retain it or not. And even if it is retained until the end of his life, he does not know whether this is good for him or not. This is why the best is in what Allah has chosen for you.”

Husayn ibn Ali rahimahullah was told, “Companion Abu Dharr rahimahullah says, “Poverty is more beloved to me than wealth and illness is more beloved to me than health.” Husayn rahimahullah then responded, “May Allah have mercy on Abu Dharr rahimahullah. As for me, I will say, ‘One who trusts God’s good choice for him will not wish for other than what Almighty Allah has chosen for him.’”

The Companion `Umar ibn al-Khattab rahimahullah wrote to Abu Musa al-Ash`ari rahimahullah, “All goodness lies in contentment with the predestination of Allah. If you are able, then be satisfied, if not, be patient.”

Contentment with the decrees of Allah is the fruit of a good opinion of the Almighty. For this reason, Ibn Mashish rahimahullah said, “Do not accuse Almighty of anything. You have to put your trust in Him in everything. And do not prefer yourself in anything over God.”

Scholars regarded contentment with predestination to be among the virtues that is not damaged by misdeeds. They said: Two misdeeds diminish the benefits of abundant good deeds: discontent with the predestination of God and injustice to the servants of God, and there are two virtues that reduce the harm of abundant bad deeds: contentment with the predestination of God and forgiveness for the servants of God. They considered contentment among the most virtuous of deeds and said that the preferable deeds are four: love of Allah, contentment with the predestination of the Almighty, asceticism in this world (*zuhd*), and depending on Allah.”

Indeed, he who is satisfied with the predestination of Almighty Allah lives with a relaxed heart. But he who chooses for his *nafs* and makes preparations for it will live a distressed and vexatious life. The great righteous Sahl al-Tustari rahimahullah said, “Renounce planning

and choosing for these two qualities make life difficult for people.”²⁵ Imam ibn Ataillah al-Iskandari ؒ said, “Give your *nafs* respite from planning and management. Do not occupy yourself with what the Other is occupied in doing for you.”

The great righteous have scrutinised this issue meticulously and considered that the objection to the condition of a servant to be an opposition to the Creator, who decreed for him this condition and predestined it for him. Imam ash-Sha`rani ؒ noted, “He took vows from us that if we saw someone in straitened circumstances from us, we should not hasten to call him unfortunate. For in that there is a scent of remonstrance to God Almighty. Rather we should ask God for his relief and forgiveness.

CONTENTMENT AND ABSOLUTE SUBMISSION TO HIM – THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF SERVITUDE TO ALLAH

Contentment with the predestinations of Allah and complete submission to Him (*taslim*) are the highest degree of servitude and worship. It is precisely in these qualities – submission and the entrusting of one’s affairs to the Almighty only - that the perfection of Islam is consummated. Indeed, the possessor of the quality of submission, (even if a curse were wrapped around his neck, like Satan) will still be pleased with such a predetermination of the Almighty, as well as with his faith (*iman*) and Islam as a whole, because the devoted seeker is always satisfied with God’s Decree and destiny and not with his own actions. However, if a person finds himself in some disapproved situation and this causes him concern, then he is a servant to his *nafs*. But if for him it makes no difference whatever situation he may find himself in (pleasant or unpleasant), then he will truly be a servant to his Lord. And this is the root and foundation of all matters. Therefore, you, O one who has entered the path of Allah, should persistently be His servant, since the Almighty and Sanctified Allah always remains your Lord. How eloquently this is written of in the following couplet:

²⁵ You can plan but only if you comprehend this to be with the decision and permission of Allah. - Ed.

“If there is a difference in praise and defamation for you, then you worship idols (I swear by my life).”

This is the principle that the most distinguished of the righteous elites have agreed upon in all other *tariqats*.

Once, Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمته الله asked his spiritual guide Ali al-Khawwas رحمته الله, “What should I do with the poor: show generosity by giving them alms or leave them in this state, displaying decorum (*adab*) towards Almighty Allah, Who impoverished them?” Ali al-Khawwas رحمته الله replied, “Courtesy to Allah is more preferable with me. Truly, when Almighty Allah makes a rich man materially poor, He does this because of wisdom He wants to reveal, so be aware of this. Almighty Allah sees and hears everything in the universe, therefore show decorum to Him and His creations in the state in which you find them. Do not seek to transform their condition without the explicit permission of Almighty Allah, because it may happen that you violate ethical norms in relation to Allah by asking Him to enrich a person whom He impoverished. After all, the Almighty could then transfer the state of this servant to you, replacing what you love and are contented with by that which you do not love and you are dissatisfied with, just as you yourself sought to alter the pauper’s state, which Allah loved and desired for him. And if Allah forgives you and does not punish in this way, then this forgiveness may turn out for you to be a wily stratagem which you will not even sense and you will fall into spiritual perdition together with those who have been destroyed.”

COMFORT IN COMPLETE SUBMISSION

Know that the most abominable manifestation of disrespect on the part of a servant is when he insistently asks for something from the Almighty, and then, after the request has been fulfilled, asks the Creator for deliverance from the benefaction due to the heaviness of what unfolds to him. But if a person had not asked for anything at all and thus had manifested his modesty before Almighty Allah, then the Lord - securing for him a blessed outcome - would endow him with much more even than this servant might have expected. Therefore, withdrawing from making requests is proper. However, this stricture applies only to a supplicant's praying for himself: as for the petitioning of blessings for others, there are no such prohibitions.

Sometimes blessings are hidden in tribulations and tribulations in blessings. Thus, if we attempt to delve into the hidden meaning of blessings, we will find much which is troublesome in them. The most minor of these troubles is the Almighty's demand from His servant who possesses certain blessings to fulfill his obligations with respect to that bestowed by the Almighty: that is, to constantly express gratitude for blessings not only with his tongue but also with his heart, again and again ascribing these to Almighty Allah and also to use them solely for purposes assigned by the Creator. But if we delve into the true meaning of troubles which have been sent us, we find that in them there are great blessings, because troubles induce in us a sense of compunction, submissiveness, and a lessening of wrongdoings, i.e. it will make us meek and prevent us from arrogance.

Almighty Allah imposed on us the performance of worship in all its forms and also to acquire knowledge solely so that we would respond to Him, glorified and exalted be He. Accordingly, the *naafs* of the prophets and perfect righteous achieved the highest state of humility and submission by observing the prescriptions of Allah. That is why the *naafs* of those of this level are not tested by any vices and shortcomings.

Now reflect on the following. When a servant of Allah performs worship but does not cleanse his *nafs*, and if he begins to admire his own actions, then Almighty Allah (if He desires to be merciful) may test such a servant, for example, with adultery. In such a way the Almighty will expose this servant before his neighbors and acquaintances and dispatch someone to escort the sinner to the house of the ruler for punishment. And when they enter the name of this servant in the register of sinners, he will see his *nafs* more despicable and contemptible than a noisome bodily secretion.

Once, Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمته الله heard someone shouting out in a dream, “O Abdulwahhab, hear these all-encompassing words, which are the measure of all that was said in all the Divine Scriptures.” And in his dream the imam answered thus, “I listen.” And then he heard, “A servant should not occupy his heart with thoughts about doing or not doing something, even the choice of inhalation for the next breath. However, he must honour any action that We have produced through him. And if this action is an expression of worship, then it is necessary to praise Us for it, asking for forgiveness for any omission or negligence. But if this act is disobedience, then he should praise Us for it as a predestination,²⁶ asking for forgiveness for the transgression of Our command. And every negligence or careless omission should be replaced by adequate deeds. So We have provided you with a way to observe ethics (*adab*) in relation to Us in everything that We effect through your hands.”

Now you have learnt that no action ever emerges from us except that it has a remedy. After all, the essence of a servant is as though he were a gatekeeper standing at the gateway between the visible and invisible parts of the body and letting this or that deed pass through. He honours every deed no matter what the situation, always remembering that he is a servant.

A person who has achieved perfection sees the connections between things with eyes which are sound. As for the possessor of one eye, such as *faqih*²⁷ and *murid* – he is one-eyed. And everyone who considers that he can do something himself but fell deficient

26 i.e., a predestination of that which has happened by the will of the Almighty.

27 *Faqih* - expert in the explicit Shari`a sciences.

in its accomplishment, has certainly associated a partner with Almighty Allah. Truly, Almighty Allah never requires us to do any act at all, He only says, “Do that of which I am the Creator and nothing else.” It follows from this that the intensity of spiritual remorse for the commission of a sin depends on the severity of the attribution of the deed to the servant.

But it is not permissible for a servant to downplay his sins. Rather perceiving your sins as serious ones is extremely necessary, because it strengthens the preparedness of the heart, lifting it up the steps of sincerity. After all, being at this level, a servant sees his sins insignificant in comparison with the forgiveness of Almighty Allah, for then he realizes that the true doer is only Almighty Allah and no one else. So beware, my brother, of ordering the believer to do that which you would command a righteous person (*muhsin*), that is not to grieve over his sins, for that will plunge him back to the beginning of his path.

Know that one who knows Allah will never consider himself to be a participant in the commission of any action; on the contrary, he will see himself only as an entity through which the Lord manifests deeds. This is because acts are also symptoms which are manifested only through bodies. It is as though parts of the servant act as gates for actions, like the door through which people exit - and nothing more. After all, people who pass through these gates are not born of them and similarly, actions are not undertaken by limbs.

So, if the *nafs* of a servant is a substance created for Allah alone, then how and when can a servant do anything without the participation of the Almighty Creator and still expect Allah to accept this act? Indeed, the *nafs* themselves, together with all their deeds, belong only to Almighty Allah and do not leave His power even for the blink of an eye! Whoever realizes this does not rejoice in the abundance of the manifestation of good deeds in his hands and does not grieve for the lack of them.²⁸ Sheikh ash-Shazali رحمته الله said, “I saw myself in a dream sitting with a certain person in front of my spiritual mentor. He told me, ‘Remember these four axioms: one concerns this person, and three concern you personally:

²⁸ For he did not commit them. - Ed.

1. Do not choose for yourself affairs of any kind but rather choose the lack of choice. Flee from any sort of choice and even from this flight itself. Flee from everything to Almighty Allah,²⁹ for He said, “Your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and chooses what is good for them, they do not have any choice.”[Quran 28:68]

All that the Shari`a chose together with its order is the choice of Allah and you have nothing to do with it. It is absolutely indispensable for you to recognize that it is the choice of the Creator. Listen and obey! And if people enter into dispute with you, tell them, ‘Allah knows everything you do.’

2. Maintain detachment from worldly delights and rely on Allah in everything. Because having trust in Allah is the main part of every circumstance. Make Allah your witness and rely on Him in words, deeds, manners and circumstances.

3. Beware of doubt, guard against attributing a companion to Allah (*shirk*), against greediness, as well as objection to the Almighty in anything at all. Worship Almighty Allah with complete closeness in the state of *ihсан*. The mentor further added, ‘Two qualities have wounded and destroyed the soul of this poor man:³⁰ his embarking upon worldly affairs at his own discretion, relying on himself alone, but in regarding the affairs of eternal life he proceeded with doubt in the gifts that Almighty Allah confers. So return to the Almighty at the commencement of the ordering of your affairs to receive from Him the favour of facilitation. Remember that any misdeed, following the commission of which you have a fear of Allah and you flee only to Him, will not be counted as an offence. Accept your sustenance as Allah has sent it down to you, employing your knowledge and following the *Sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ. Do not attempt to advance yourself in degree (of self-improvement) independently until you yourself are raised, otherwise you will stumble.’”

29 i.e., you do not choose anything for yourself, but follow the choice of Allah.

30 i.e., the third person present in the dream of ash-Shazali ﷺ.

WHOEVER IS SATISFIED WILL HAVE CONTENTMENT

Almighty Allah said that one of the signs of His satisfaction with His servant is the contentment of the servant with His Lord. Almighty Allah also said (meaning), “Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him.” (Sura al-Bayyinah, ayah 8).

Moreover, a *murid* said to his spiritual master, “If I find my heart pleased with Almighty Allah, I know that He is pleased with me,” to which the master replied, “Well said, young man.”

In addition, Allah revealed to Musa عليه السلام, “O son of Imran, verily My pleasure is in your pleasure with My decree.”

CHAPTER 3

SHAME THE ESSENCE OF SHAME

Know that the lexical meaning of the Arabic word “*haya*” is decency and the constraining of the *nafs* from villainous deeds. In Sufi terminology “*haya*” is contraction and constriction of the heart. The imam of the Sufis, Junaid al-Baghdadi رحمته الله, gave shame the following definition: “The state which emerges between you witnessing the favours of your God and your shortcomings is called shame, which is abandoning all pretensions before God.” Shame is of several kinds:

1. Shame arising from transgressions, as was the case with Adam عليه السلام. It is reported that after the prophet Adam عليه السلام ate the forbidden fruit, he started to flee in Paradise. Then Almighty Allah called after him, “Are you running away from Me?” Adam عليه السلام answered, “No, I am fleeing from shame before You.”

2. Shame of inadequacy (*taqsir*), as was the case with the angels who exclaimed, “We have not worshipped You as You truly deserve to be worshipped!”

3. Another type of shame is the shame of reverence (*ijlal*), as was the case with the angel Israfil عليه السلام who wrapped himself in his wings out of shame before God.

4. Shame arising from generosity. After marrying Zainab ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ organized a wedding feast at which the Companions sat up until late in the night and he was ashamed to ask them to leave him. Then the following ayah was sent down (meaning), “O you who believe! Enter not the Prophet’s houses, unless permission is given to you for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken your meal, disperse, without sitting to talk. Verily, such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet, and he is shy of (asking) you (to go), but Allah is not shy of (telling you) the truth. (Sura al-Ahzab, ayah 53).

This ayah indicates that it is necessary to show decorum and respect towards the Prophet ﷺ, thus a visit to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ requires particular ethics and choice of the appropriate time. This ayah says that such dining is only permissible upon invitation. That is to say, when you are permitted to enter the house of the Prophet ﷺ and are invited to partake of a meal, then enter his house with propriety and observe the necessary requirements and Shari`a norms applying to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

In the book “At-Ta’wilat an-Najmiyya” it is said, “When all required has been done, depart without having done anything remiss. And may the Prophet’s ﷺ good nature not deflect you from being deferential towards him ﷺ and may his sense of great modesty not induce you to impose on the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. It is probable that the Prophet’s ﷺ gracious manners tempted those who came to visit him to be inconsiderate. That is why the Almighty sent down this ayah.”

They say that the obligation of a sensible person who visits noble people worthy of respect is brevity in speech and a timely leave-taking, and that the sign of a fool is an untimely and inappropriate arrival and staying as a guest longer than necessary.

About shame arising from generosity, the Almighty said (meaning), “One of two girls approached him with a shy demeanor ...” (Sura al-Qasas, ayah 25) In this ayah is described the bashfulness of one of the two daughters of the prophet

Shu'aib عليه السلام regarding the prophet Musa عليه السلام because she was offering him hospitality and was ashamed that Musa might not accept. Thus shame is the quality of a host and is the type of shame that comes from generosity.

5. Shame arising from modesty. Because of his shame, 'Ali ibn Abu Talib عليه السلام, being the husband of Fatima عليها السلام, the Prophet's ﷺ daughter, could not (directly) ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ a question about the Shari'a ruling regarding secretion of pre-seminal fluid and so asked Miqdad ibn al-Aswad رضي الله عنه to ask the Messenger ﷺ about it.

6. Shame of humility, that arises from regarding something as too lowly to be cause for concern, as was the case with prophet Musa عليه السلام, when he remarked, "I need something of this world, and I am ashamed to ask You, O Lord!" And then the Almighty said, "Ask Me even for the salt for your dough and the fodder for your sheep."

7. Shame arising from beneficence, this being the shame of the Lord. When a servant crosses the bridge of Sirat in the Hereafter, he will be handed a sealed book in which will be written, "You did what you did, but I am ashamed of showing it to you. So go on to Paradise, truly, I have forgiven you!"

The Prophet ﷺ described the essence of shame to his companions thus, "O people, be fully ashamed before God". They said: "But we are ashamed, O Prophet of God, and praise be to God!" He replied, "This is not true shame. Let one who wishes to be ashamed properly before God guard his mind and what it holds in consciousness, let him guard his stomach and what it contains and let him remember death and the trial of the grave. Let the one who desires the Hereafter abandon the adornment of the worldly life. One who does all this has shame before God as it befits Him."

A wise person said, "Keep shame alive within you by keeping the company of one before whom others are ashamed."

SHAME IS A PART OF FAITH

Know that one of the conditions of the *murid* is to have his heart as a continually burning abode out of shame for omissions in fulfilling obligations to Almighty Allah. Fudayl ibn `Iyad ؓ said, “Five of the signs of wretchedness in a man are hardness in the heart, ruthlessness of the eye, paucity of shame, desire for this world, and expecting too much of it.” Wise ones also said that when reverence and shame is abandoned by a servant, nothing good is left in him.

The degree of a servant’s shame before Almighty Allah is proportionate to his faith and detachment from worldly life. The great righteous noted, “Shame and feeling of intimacy (*uns*)³¹ knock on the door of the heart. If they find there renunciation (*zuhd*) and scrupulousness (*wara`*),³² they settle down. If not, they keep on their journey.

Almighty Allah said (meaning), “She desired him and he would have desired her, if he had not earlier seen the proof of his Lord.” (Sura Yusuf, ayah 24) The “proof” here was that Zuleykha threw a cloth over an idol which stood in the corner of the room. On seeing this, Yusuf ؑ asked her what she was doing. She replied, “I am ashamed to commit a sin in front of him.” Then Yusuf ؑ said, “I am even more ashamed of myself before Almighty Allah.”

EXAMPLES OF SHAME OF PEOPLE OF TARIQAH

From the biographies of the earlier righteous, many great examples of their shame before Almighty Allah have come to us which arose from them naturally and without pretension. Some of the righteous, because of their shame before Almighty Allah, could not enter the mosque, the house of Allah, following any disobedience to the Almighty. Once, people saw a man who was performing a prayer outside a mosque. When they asked him, “Why do you not go inside the mosque to perform *namaz*?” He replied, “I am ashamed to enter God’s house when I have disobeyed Him.”

³¹ Love and a sense of sweetness and solace in the remembrance of the Almighty.

³² Scrupulousness in observing the precepts of religion, even in the little things, and avoidance of what is permitted for fear of falling into what is doubtful. - Ed.

Among these righteous ones were those who were ashamed to be afraid of anyone except the Almighty. One of them recounted, “One night we were going through a dense forest and stumbled upon a sleeping man, beside whom his horse was grazing. We woke him and inquired, “Are you not afraid to sleep in such a dangerous place, full of wild beasts?” The man raised his head and replied, “I am ashamed before Allah to fear anything other than Him,” and, turning away, he fell asleep again.

Abu Bakr al-Warraq ؓ said, “Sometimes I would perform two *raka’ats* of prayer to Almighty Allah and then come away feeling shameful like a thief coming away from a robbery”.

ALLAH’S SHAME BEFORE HIS SERVANT

Know that Almighty Allah is ashamed before His servants. In the Tawrat (Torah) is written, “Be ashamed to commit sin and, truly, I am ashamed to punish you.” In one of the divinely revealed books it is also said, “My servant is unjust to Me. When he calls upon Me, I am embarrassed to turn him down. And yet he disobeys Me without being ashamed before Me!” A hadith of the Prophet ﷺ says, “Indeed, Allah is the most ashamed and the most Honourable and when His servant raises up his hands in supplication, Almighty Allah is ashamed not to answer this prayer.”

CHAPTER 4

MORAL CHARACTER

MERITS OF GOOD MANNERS

Fine moral character is the most excellent virtue of the servant and the one by which his inner nature is known. Almighty Allah favoured His Prophet ﷺ with many excellent qualities, but He never praised him for any of his qualities as He praised him for his character. The Almighty said (meaning), “Verily, you, O Prophet, have an exalted standard of character.” (Sura al-Qalam, ayah 4)

Scholars said that “exalted character” means that one neither disputes with others nor is disputed by them because he possesses intimate knowledge of God Most High. Other scholars have said that the meaning of exalted character is that the harshness of men does not affect you, once you have become attentive to God. It was also said that it means that you have no aspiration other than Almighty Allah.”

Other theological scholars have further interpreted in detail the above-mentioned ayah of the Quran, “You, O Prophet, are the possessor of exalted moral character. No creation will comprehend the magnitude of that exalted character. That is why you endure the harm of creation that humans can hardly tolerate. Some of them said: Because you are created by the morals of God, you are not affected by their slander and neither harmed by their harm, because you are patient through God and not by yourself. As the Almighty said (meaning), “Show patience and your patience is only with the help of Allah” (Sura an-Nahl, ayah 127) Indeed, there is no one more patient than Allah. The words of the ayah “possessor of an exalted moral character” also signify the pre-eminence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and mean that the Prophet ﷺ embodies praiseworthy qualities and deeds that evoke Allah’s satisfaction; all this became natural for him. Thus Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Say, O Prophet, ‘For bringing you the Quran, I do not demand from you any reward and I do not try to manifest to you a character not inherent to me.’” (Sura Sad, ayah 86) In other words, I make no pretense of manifesting good moral character, because this pretense would not be long sustained and eventually the character will return to its natural state.

Theological scholars have also told that a person’s moral character changes depending on whom he is friends with and maintains some sort of relationship with, as is stated in the hadith: “Man is of the religion of his friend. Therefore, may everyone carefully mind whom he or she befriends.” In another hadith it is said, “Do not sit with the people of vain desires and innovations, for they have a scourge like scabies.”

It was specifically the moral character of the Prophet ﷺ that was remarked upon by the Almighty and described with the word “exalted,” Almighty Allah also calling the Quran by the same word. The moral character of the Prophet ﷺ assimilated within itself the noble qualities of all the preceding prophets; the gratitude of the prophet Nuh عليه السلام, the friendliness of the prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام, the sincerity of the prophet Musa عليه السلام, the commitment to his promises of the prophet Ismail عليه السلام, the patience of the prophets Ayub عليه السلام and Yaqub, the apology of the prophet Dawud عليه السلام, the modesty of the prophets Suleiman عليه السلام and Isa عليه السلام and also other qualities of all the other prophets. Of this the Almighty said (meaning), “O Muhammad ﷺ, follow the guidance of the preceding prophets.” By “guidance” is not implied knowledge of the Almighty, because that is imitation, and is unworthy of our Prophet ﷺ. Neither does this refer to the Shari`a, for the law of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ abrogates all the commandments of the previous prophets.

The actual meaning of the words “follow the guidance” is to follow the examples of the outstanding moral qualities of the previous prophets. And when the Lord tells the Prophet ﷺ to follow the guidance, He is thereby telling the Messenger ﷺ to unite in himself all the meritorious and outstanding among other qualities of the previous prophets. None of the preceding prophets or messengers achieved such a lofty degree as this. Thus, Almighty Allah singled out the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the possessor of exalted moral character. In this regard, one of those who knew Allah said the following,

“Every prophet has a virtue, the sum of which are gathered in Muhammad. ﷺ.”

All of the above is condensed in Aisha’s ؓ answer to a question about the Prophet’s ﷺ moral character, “The Quran was His moral character.” By this she meant that the Prophet ﷺ was graced with all the good moral traits and praiseworthy qualities mentioned in the Quran and also was cleansed of all deeds and reproachable qualities forbidden by the Holy Scripture. In another hadith it is said that Aisha ؓ answered in this way, “Have you not read the ayah

of the Quran?” (meaning), “Believers will thrive who are humble in prayer, avoid useless and frivolous conversation, regularly pay zakat, keep their private parts to themselves with the exception of their wives and concubines, for which they have no reproof. But he who strives to gratify his desires in a different way (with illicit women) crosses the boundaries of that which is permitted.

Those believers flourish who safeguard that entrusted to them for custody, honour agreements and are perseverant in the timely performance of the prescribed prayers. They will inherit paradise Firdaus³³ in which they will abide eternally.” (Sura al-Muminun, ayat 1-11) Such is the moral character of the Prophet ﷺ.” In these ayat there are also reminders to listeners of the greatness of the Prophet’s ﷺ moral character: of faith, which is the basis of the morals of the heart; *namaz* - the mainstay of physical morals; *zakat* – the basis of financial morals; chastity in relation to foreign women and trustworthiness and commitment to agreements. In these ayat, the Almighty repeatedly mentions «those who cherish the prescribed prayers», drawing attention to their importance and great significance.

Junaid al-Baghdadi ؒ said, “The Prophet ﷺ possessed a highly glorified moral character; he desired the blessings of both worlds for his community but did not seek to acquire them for himself.”

The righteous Husayn al-Nuri ؒ said, “How could the Prophet’s moral character not be great when Allah had illuminated his soul (inner world) with the light of His morals?”³⁴

In the book of the Great Sheikh³⁵ “Talqih al-Adhhan” it is said, “The Prophet ﷺ was endowed with the ability to speak succinctly and in words that had a deep and wise meaning, for he ﷺ was sent in order to bring the good qualities of people to perfection. Thus, the Almighty said, “Truly, you possess an exalted moral character.” This shows that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is appointed as the straight path. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily, the Almighty possesses three hundred and sixty attributes. And he who believes in Allah

33 Al-Qurtubi writes that this is the highest level of Paradise. - Ed.

34 The soul of the Prophet ﷺ assimilated divine light from the attributes of Allah, which graced his moral character (in concordance with the attributes of the Almighty), as stated in the hadith, “Adopt the moral attributes of Allah.”

35 This is an epithet used for Sheikh Muhiddin ibn al-Arabi ؒ. - Ed.

as the unique god, and possesses even one of these qualities, will enter Paradise.” Then the Companion Abu Bakr ؓ asked, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, is there in me at least one of these qualities?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “You have all of them, O Abu Bakr. And for Allah the most beloved of them is generosity.”

Therefore, one’s best manner in dealing with the Almighty is complete submission (*taslim*) and contentment. And the best of his manners in dealing with people is forgiveness and generosity. In the hadith are emphasized the words “as the unique god”, because sometimes there may be good morals and no faith, just as there may be faith and no morals, therefore if faith alone was enough to generate good morals, the believer would not been told to do certain deeds and not others.

NOBLE MORALS ARE THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

The noble morals that the Messenger of God ﷺ was sent to complete are the essence of religion. In this regard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed I have been sent to bring to fulfillment noble traits of character.”

The essence of good morals is that a person should be mild-mannered, tender and gentle with his household, his servant and all Muslims. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The inhabitants of Paradise are gentle, mild-mannered and sympathetic to others but the inhabitants of Hell are hard-hearted and harsh.” When the companions asked, “But, O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, how does one identify hard-hearted people?” To which the Prophet ﷺ replied, “They are people who are severe with their households, friends and relatives.” Our Protector Lord said (meaning), “And talk kindly to people.” (Sura al-Baqarah, ayah 83) The Almighty also said (meaning), “Tell, O Prophet, My servants to conduct their speech in the best possible manner to non-believers.” (Sura al-Isra, ayah 53) And the best incorporate all that is best and most pleasant in their manners. In short, show to others those qualities that would please your own soul: pleasant speech, good words, fine and admirable deeds. And try to eschew foul language, improper words and evil deeds that

you would not like to be treated with and do not engage in them with others. God Almighty treats a servant according to the way he is depicted and the manners with which people treat him and the reward and penalty for that description is corresponding to the way he treats others. That is, one who will be as though a Paradise for the servants of Allah - a merciful and a cool shadow in which others relax - will receive a corresponding recompense from Almighty Allah. Whoever honours a servant out of respect for his master, has actually honoured the master himself. Thus in a hadith from Almighty Allah it is said that on the Day of Judgment the Lord will say to His servant, "I was hungry, but you did not feed Me. I asked you to quench My thirst, but you did not give Me water. I was ill, but you did not visit Me." To which the servant responded, "How can You experience hunger, when You are the Lord of all the worlds? How can You be ill, being the Lord of all the worlds? How can You ask me to quench Your thirst, while You are the Lord of all worlds, all of which You created?" Then the Creator, Glorified and Exalted be He, explained, "Verily, a certain servant of Mine was ill, and if you had visited him you would have found Me near him. A certain servant of Mine was hungry and if you had fed him, you would have found that with Me. A certain servant of Mine asked you to quench his thirst; if you had given him water, there you would also have found that with Me." That is, Almighty Allah clarified His words "I was hungry, I was ill, I asked you to quench My thirst" Himself with the following expressions, "A certain servant of Mine was hungry, a certain servant of Mine was ill and a certain servant of Mine asked you to quench his thirst."

Noble deeds bring effects to its owner in both worlds. In this regard this, the following hadith concerning Abu Talib is conveyed. Once Abbas ﷺ asked, "O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, Abu Talib defended you and helped you; will this bring him any benefit in that world?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes, and if it were not for me, he would have found himself at the very lowest level of Hell." It is said that Abu Lahab in a dream saw water issuing from his thumb; this happened every Monday night. And the reason was that this was the day of the week when Abu Lahab freed his servant upon learning from her the good news of the birth of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

One of the righteous said, “He who is of the community of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ but has not seen Him and sincerely desires to do so, let him look at the Quran. For there is no difference between a gaze directed at the Quran and a gaze on the beloved Prophet ﷺ. The Quran is like a diffusion of the bodily image of Muhammad ﷺ, son of Abdullah, son of Abd al-Muttalib.”

Another of the righteous ones remarked, “Whoever wishes to behold the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, let him observe the *Sunna*, especially in those places where it has died out. This is since the resuscitation of the Prophet ﷺ after his death is the revival of his *Sunna*. And he who revives the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has revived all humanity, for the Prophet ﷺ incorporates all that is most complete and most perfect.”

One of the righteous said: After the prophethood of the Messenger of God ﷺ there were no inferior morals left at all, because he ﷺ made clear to us all of their trajectories. He ﷺ wanted that there be no aspect of confusion and no reason for committing vices because he ﷺ uncovered and clarified the noble ones and those which are vile.

Theological scholars noted that Almighty Allah offered the Prophet ﷺ the keys to all earthly goods but the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not accept them. Then the Creator elevated the Prophet ﷺ up to heaven on the night of the Ascension and showed him all the angels, as well as Paradise. But the Messenger of Allah ﷺ paid no attention to all this. And the Almighty said (meaning), “The gaze of Prophet turned not aside (right or left), nor did it transgress beyond the limit (ordained for it).” (Sura al-Najm, ayah 17) Therefore the Almighty said (meaning), “Truly, you are the possessor of exalted moral character.” This means that neither adversity nor bestowal can force the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to deviate from the true path.

It is known how much adversity and distress the Prophet ﷺ bore and yet exercised patience. His blessed head was fractured and a tooth was broken but despite this he said, “Oh my Lord, forgive my people, for, truly, they do not know what they do!” And on the

Day of Judgment, when every prophet will be concerned about himself, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ will exclaim, “My community, my community!”

STATEMENTS REGARDING MORAL CHARACTER

Many golden sayings are devoted to good moral qualities. We would like to convey some of them to invigorate those who are resolved and to awaken the asleep:

1. They asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, “Who among the believers has the best faith?” He replied, “The best in moral character.” And when they asked, “What is ruin?” He answered, “Bad character.”

2. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “You will never make people happy by your wealth, so do it by means of a cheerful expression and your good moral character.”

3. Once the Prophet ﷺ was asked, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, turn to Almighty Allah for a prayer against the non-believers!” To which he responded, “Truly, I have been sent as a mercy and not as a punishment.”

4. Fudayl ؓ said, “If a person excelled in all benevolence but mistreated one of his chickens, he could not be counted as one of moral character.”

5. It is said, “Moral character consists of thinking little of whatever comes from you to God and regarding as great whatever comes to you from Him.

6. Shah al-Karmani ؓ stated, “A sign of good moral character is that you do not cause harm to others, and you patiently bear the harms they cause you.”

7. The righteous Wahnab ؓ asserted, “If one is able to maintain a good moral character for forty days, God will make it part of his natural disposition (*tabi`a*).”

8. Hasan al-Basri ؓ interpreting the words of Almighty Allah, “and purify your garments” (Sura al-Muddathir, ayah 4) explained that it means, “O Prophet, improve your moral character.”

9. Abu Hafs ؓ was asked about good moral character and he replied, “It consists of what the Almighty chose for the Prophet in His words (meaning), “Embrace forgiveness and command what is right.” (Sura al-A`raf, ayah 199)

10. It is said that, “Good moral character is that you be close to people, while being a stranger to their affairs.”

11. It is said that, “Good moral character lies in accepting harsh treatment from men and the decree of God with neither vexation nor anxiety.”

12. It is said that, “good moral character consists of bearing adversity with a good-natured spirit.”

13. It is said that, “Bad moral character constricts the heart of its possessor, because it allows no room there for anything other than his own desires and it thus becomes like a small space just large enough for its tenant.”

14. It is said that, “A sign of a person’s bad moral character is paying attention to the bad character of others.”

MANIFESTATIONS OF GOOD MORAL CHARACTER

Many wonderful stories have come down to us from our righteous predecessors. For some people these stories may seem fictional. However, without any doubt, these are true accounts. The righteous achieved degrees of knowledge of Almighty Allah and thus realised the true essence of good moral character.

1. Abdullah ibn `Umar ؓ freed a servant, if he performed his prayers well. And when his servants became aware of their master’s virtuous character, they strove to perform prayer diligently, only to make a show for him. But Abdullah ؓ would still free all who were engaged in worshipping in this way. This was once pointed out to

him and he said, "If someone should deceive me for the sake of Allah, then I am ready to be deceived."

2. When al-Ahnaf ibn Qays³⁶ ؓ was asked, "Who taught you moral character?" he answered, "Qays ibn `Asim al-Naqri." Then he was asked, "How far did his moral character extend?" al-Ahnaf ؓ replied, "Once a female servant of Qays wanted to bring him sizzling meat on a skewer - but the skewer was very hot and slipped out of the servant's hands and fell onto a child of ibn `Asim, which led to the death of the baby.

The servant was utterly devastated but Qays ibn `Asim al-Naqri said to her, "Do not fear, I set you free for the sake of Allah."

3. It was said to Ibrahim bin Adham ؓ, "Have you ever taken delight in this world?" He said, "Yes, I was sitting and a man came and slapped me round the face."³⁷

4. It is related that whenever boys saw Uways al-Qarani ؓ, they would pelt him with stones. In response, he would just tell them, "If you must do this, then use small stones so you will not bruise my legs and prevent me from standing to perform my prayers."

5. Once, a certain man was following al-Ahnaf ibn Qays, ؓ and insulting him. When al-Ahnaf ؓ reached the quarter where he lived, he stopped and advised, "Young man, if you have any more to say to me, then say it all now, before some of the halfwits of the neighborhood hear you and respond to you in kind."

6. It was narrated that the ruler of the faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib ؓ once summoned his servant but he did not respond. He called him again and again. Then Ali ؓ himself went to the servant and, seeing that he was lying down, asked, "Perhaps you cannot hear me, O servant?" When the servant answered that he could, the ruler of the faithful ؓ asked, "Then what caused you not to answer my call?" The servant replied, "I feel safe from your punishment, so I allowed myself to be lazy." Then Ali ؓ said to him, "Go, you are free for the sake of Almighty Allah."

³⁶ Ahnaf ibn Qays ؓ possessed great humility and good morals. The Arabs cite him as an example of one possessing praiseworthy morals and dignity.

³⁷ A sign of being pleased with whatever comes from Allah in a state of *fana'* - annihilation - Ed.

7. It is said that Ma`ruf al-Karkhi ؑ stopped at the Tigris River to make an ablution and put his Quran and cloak aside. A woman then came along and took them.

He then caught up with the stranger and said to her, “O my sister, I am Ma`ruf. Do not worry, I will not do you any harm. Do you have a son who can read?” She replied that she did not. Then Ma`ruf asked, “Or maybe you have a husband who reads?” And when she again answered in the negative, he said to her, “Then return the Quran to me and you can keep the cloak.”

8. Once, thieves impudently broke into Sheikh Abu `Abdurrahman as-Sulami’s ؑ home and carried away everything in it. It was said that he told his friend, “I once went to the market and saw my stolen cloak being auctioned, but I turned away without paying the matter any attention.”

9. A woman once shouted to Malik ibn Dinar ؑ: “O you hypocrite!” He retorted: “O woman, you have found that name of mine which the townspeople of Basra have overlooked thus far!”

10. Yahya ibn Ziyad al-Harithi ؑ had a servant with a bad temper. And when Yahya was asked, “Why do you keep such a bad servant?” he answered, “That I might learn forbearance.”

11. They say that Ibrahim ibn Adham ؑ once went into the wilderness and met a soldier there who asked, “Where is the nearest settlement?” Ibrahim ؑ pointed towards the cemetery. The soldier thought that he was mocking him and struck Ibrahim ؑ painfully on the head, hurting him. When Ibrahim left, the soldier was told that this man was Ibrahim ibn Adham, the ascetic from Khorasan. And then the soldier came to him to apologise. In response, Ibrahim ؑ said to him, “When you struck me, I asked the Almighty to grant you Paradise.” The soldier asked about the reason for such an appeal and Ibrahim replied, “I knew that God would reward me for taking the beating. However, I did not want my portion to be good at your expense and yours be bad because of me!”

12. It is narrated that a certain person invited Sheikh Abu Uthman al-Hiri ؑ to dinner. And when the righteous man arrived at

the gate of the house, he heard from the owner, “O Sheikh, now is an unsuitable time for you to come inside. And, anyway, I regret having inviting you, therefore you must leave.” And when Abu Uthman had already reached the gates of his own house, he heard the person calling him again, “O Sheikh, I very much regret what was said” and began to apologize and said, “Please come now.” The sheikh went a second time and at the gate of the house heard the same words as the first time. That person behaved in exactly the same way with the righteous for a third and a fourth time, Abu Uthman al-Hiri ؓ dutifully leaving and coming again to the man’s door only to be sent away. And only after yet another refusal did this man admit, “O Sheikh, I only wanted to test you,” and then began to apologize profusely and praised him. Then the sheikh said, “Do not praise me for a quality belonging to dogs; for when a dog is called, it comes, and when it is yelled at, it runs away.”

13. Another tradition says that Abu Uthman ؓ was once walking along a road in the midday heat. And suddenly, from the roof of one of the houses, a bucket of ashes was tipped onto the righteous. His companions became very angry and began to curse the person who dumped the ashes. However, Abu Uthman ordered, “Don’t say anything! One who deserved the hellfire but is covered only with ashes has no right to be angry.”

14. It is said that a *murid* once came to visit Ja`far ibn Hanzala ؓ. The householder tended to the *murid* with the utmost hospitality, whereupon he said, “You would be a fine person, were it not for the fact that you are Jewish.”³⁸ To this Ja`far ؓ responded, “My religious creed has no effect on my service of your needs! Therefore, pray for a cure³⁹ for yourself and for guidance for me!”

15. It is said that one of the fire-worshippers was a regular customer of the tailor Abdullah al-Khayat ؓ. Abdullah sewed clothes for him and he always paid with counterfeit dirhams, which Abdullah used to accept. Once, because he was busy, Abdullah was unable to go to his shop. When the fire-worshiper again came with fake

³⁸ It is probable that the *murid* believed that he was Jewish and that Ja`far ؓ, out of modesty, did not reveal to him the truth of his religious creed.

³⁹ He was probably ill.

dirhams, Abdullah's apprentice refused to take them and the fire-worshiper consequently had to pay with genuine money. Upon his return, Abdullah enquired of his apprentice, "Where is the Magian's shirt?" The apprentice told him what had happened. Then Abdullah exclaimed, "You have done a terrible thing! This man has been paying me in fake dirhams for a long time but I showed patience by throwing these coins into a well so he would not cheat others with them."

CHAPTER 5

ASCETICISM IN THE WORLD

THE MEANING OF RENUNCIATION OF THE WORLDLY

The essence of renunciation of the worldly (*zuhd*) is the emptiness of the heart from all except the Almighty, its forgetfulness of causes and reasons, the renunciation of any means of obtaining worldly possessions and also the renunciation of property itself. By renunciation is meant the absence of any hope for a long life and the liberation of both the heart and hands from pursuit of the goods of worldly life. Asceticism leads a person to generosity with possessions, just as love begets generosity of the spirit.

No one attains the essence of asceticism until three qualities take root within him:

The first is the absence of the heart's attachment to performing deeds; that is he does not cling to his work, but rather attaches his heart to reliance on God Almighty, and his work is nothing but following the ways that God Almighty commanded to follow.

The second is to talk without enticement, that is, with lack of desire to obtain others' goods through one's words.

The third is distinction without vanity and striving for ambition. This means that no matter how much Almighty Allah might elevate a person's authority, a true servant of Allah always perceives himself to be lower and more unworthy than others. Such a servant of Allah does not seek to dominate other people and does not place himself higher than them.

And know that the love of the world is reprehensible in all laws and is the root of every sin and the cause of every *fitnah*. The servant must abstain from the world and remove from his heart the love of prestige, for love of prominence is more harmful to its owner than the love of wealth, and they both are indicative of the love of the worldly and it is an enemy to man.

CONTEMPT FOR THE WORLDLY IS NECESSARY - RENOUNCE IT

Know that Allah's close servants have revealed the true essence of worldly life and have discerned all the inconsequentiality of the worldly (*dunya*). Therefore, the righteous accord the worldly no attention and do not attach their hearts to it. It is said that one day our master Ali ibn Abu Talib ؑ entered a cemetery and said, "O inhabitants of the graves, peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah and His grace. Will you tell us your news or will we tell you ours?" In response he heard a voice saying, "And peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah and His grace. Tell us what happened after us." Then Ali ؑ continued, "Your wives got married, your property was dispersed, your children became orphans and your enemies settled in your houses which you built and made strong. This is the sort of news we have. And what is your news?" And the voice replied, "Our shrouds have rotted, our hair has fallen out, our skin has decomposed, our eyes have poured down on to our cheeks and our nostrils have flowed with suppuration and pus. What we offered we found and of what we have neglected we suffered a loss and we are mortgaged to our deeds."

Righteous ones have said the following about the worldly:

al-Fudayl ibn `Iyad ؑ said, "If the whole world were presented to me and I was not held accountable for it (on the Day of Judgement), I would be disgusted by it as one of you would detest carrion if he passed by it, cautious that it would not soil his clothes!"

Ibrahim ibn Adham ؑ, learning about a rise in the price of meat, said, "Make it cheap," that is, do not buy it at all.

Sufis thus came to the following conclusion: From whoever looks on the worldly with the gaze of love and desire, Almighty Allah removes the light of certainty and asceticism from his heart. Abul-Husayn al-Hawari ؒ was asked about the renunciation of worldly delights, to which he replied, “Asceticism is looking at the world with the eye of its inferiority and turning away from it with pride, carelessness and honour.”

The venerable master and pole of those who knew Allah, Qutb Ahmad al-Husayni ؒ, writes in the book “al-‘Aqd al-Nafis”, “Almighty Allah told the prophet Musa ؑ, ‘If you see that poverty has befallen you, then say: ‘welcome, this is a sign of the righteous’ And if you see that the worldly has come near by you, then say: ‘this is a sin the punishment of which has been hastened.’” In a hadith it is said, “Contentment is an inexhaustible treasure.” One of the righteous observed, “In our opinion, satisfaction with trivia is when a person notices no difference between well-baked and under-baked barley bread. And he eats only as much bread as he needs to be able to move his arms and legs in prayer.”

Righteous predecessors considered a man to be a fool for mourning his dead child but does not mourn over his omissions with Almighty Allah. It is as if such a person is saying, “I am crying over that which has been distracting me from my Lord.” He should – on the contrary - have rejoiced in the death of his son, devoting himself completely to his Lord, for the Almighty took from him what distracted this servant from Allah. Verily, children, wives, servants and friends will not lament after you when you die. For they lament only for that which they failed to receive from you. Therefore, be ahead of them in your weeping and say, “It is fitting for me to shed tears because of my neglected portion from Allah even before they (wife and children) cry over me.”

When Almighty Allah wants to make someone His beloved (*wali*), He will make all the worldly hateful for this servant. In a tradition it is reported, “No worldly (*dunya*) entered between a people except that God cast between them enmity and hatred.”

Indeed, all the worldly together is worth not even the wing of a mosquito before Almighty Allah. He who understands this will not praise those who have known Almighty Allah for their renunciation of worldly life. For all which ascetics may have rejected is merely a tiny fragment of that little wing that has fallen to their lot and which is not even visible because of its insignificant minuteness. And praising one who is endowed with detachment from such insignificant, useless things is actually exalting the worldly. It is as if the righteous who have attained closeness to the Lord say, “Those that love the worldly are not given the capacity to approach Almighty Allah until a servant discards and tramples on his portion of the mosquito’s wing. But none of those in love with worldly life is courageous enough to do this.”

Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمته الله said, “They have taken a vow from us that we should see the contemptibility of this despicable world and will strive to build the eternal world. For you, my beloved brother and dear friend, it is no secret that our breaths are numbered and that there will be no more and no less. And this world is the arable land of the hereafter. He who is idle at the time of sowing will be regretful at harvest time. Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Man has only that for which he exerted effort.” (Sura an-Najm, ayah 39) Regarding portion and sustenance, Almighty Allah also said (meaning), “There is no (moving) living creature on earth whose sustenance is not undertaken by Allah.” (Sura Hud, ayah 6) So striving and diligence in seeking what is guaranteed by God Almighty, and suspension and apathy in pursuing what has been entrusted to us is the greatest foolishness.

Be certain that the likeness of a person who cares for the matter of his *nafs* is like one who rears a snake which then kills him. And the likeness of a person who devotes himself to worldly life, having turned away from the matters of eternal life, is like a dog who sets upon stinking carrion.”

THE REALITY OF ASCETICISM

Former righteous people have well realised the essence of asceticism (*zuhd*) and have considered its various degrees. It is reported that when Abu Yazid al-Bastami ؒ was asked about asceticism and how he began to detach himself from worldly pleasures, this great righteous man answered, “Asceticism does not have even a single degree.” And when al-Bastami ؒ was asked why, he answered, “Because I was in ascetic seclusion for three days and on the fourth day came away. On the first day, I turned away from this world and everything that is in it. On the second day, I withdrew from the eternal world and everything in it. And on the third day I renounced everything except Almighty Allah.”

Asceticism is not that you do not hold on to the world, but that you hold it in your hand and take it out of your heart. This is how the righteous understood the essence of renouncing worldly life. They used to say, “Leave for yourself, O disciple, something from the world that will stop you from asking people, and do not go too far in leaving the world completely.” Imam ash-Sha`rani ؒ said that He took a covenant from us not to renounce the world for the ease of the abstaining; Rather, our asceticism is like that of the Gnostics, so we attach the heart to the love of our Lord alone, and we hold the worldly in its entirety after that, for God Almighty has been graceful to us that He subjugated to us what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And were it not for our need for everything in them, the expression of gratitude would not been materialised.

The righteous increasingly drew attention to the fact that holding in the heart of a servant of anything of the worldly presents danger. Therefore, they showed incredible zeal in order to warn *murids* of the grave consequences of love of the worldly. As an example, we give a few profound statements of the righteous:

Abul-Hasan Ali ibn al-Mazin ؒ said, “If you praise a person and begin to consider him as among the special righteous (*siddiq*),⁴⁰ Allah pays no attention to him as long as there is even a grain of love for the worldly in that person’s heart. I swear by Allah, of those who

40 A person who has achieved a high degree of knowledge of Almighty Allah. - Ed.

have entered the *tariqah* no one has fallen into spiritual ruination except those in whose souls there remained sweetness for wealth.”

Sheikh ash-Shazali ؒ noted, “Almighty Allah does not love a servant until he hates the worldly and those who are busy pursuing it and becomes ascetic for felicity in both worlds. Almighty Allah hates everyone who loves the worldly. Therefore, a *murid* is obliged to repel the worldly from both hands and heart.”

The righteous Abu Rabi` al-Wasiti ؒ said, “I asked Dawud to advise me, to which he replied, “Practice fasting from the worldly and make death the breaking of the fast. Flee from people as you would from wild animals.” Yahya ibn Mu`adh ؒ said, “Abstain from what is not yours, then refrain from what is yours.”

THE MUSLIM’S WAY OF LOVING THE WORLDLY

Indeed, Almighty Allah created the *nafs* with a natural inclination to love children, spouses, societal prominence and wealth. So that a *murid* does not fall into the danger of being attached to the world, scholars have explained to us the legitimate way to love these things. Imam ash-Sha`rani ؒ said, “Know Muslims, there are four reasons for the emergence of unrest: women, prestige, wealth and children. As for the love of women, your way, my brother, is to love them because Allah made them attractive, since they are part of you and since they are created from you;⁴¹ therefore loving them is as if loving a part of yourself.” This reasoning is supported by the hadith, “Start with yourself.” This is especially because it is through women that progeny are born and worldly life is created: Since, as is known, the kingdom of Almighty Allah and His establishment are manifested precisely through the birth of posterity - the creation of worldly life. Therefore, he who loves women in just this way loves them for the sake of Allah and not for the sake of his ego. And for such a servant the love of women will be a blessing from the Almighty and not a curse. Because women who are loved in the above manner turn a man towards Allah: that is, a man’s love for them is converted into love for Allah. His love for them has brought

41 Woman was created from the rib of man. - Ed.

him back to God; for they merely manifest the perfection of the Exalted Truth in creations. This is also indicated by the words of the Prophet ﷺ, “In your world, women have been made dear to me.” By this is implied an absolute love a love of women in general. And we have another love that is bounded and is also praiseworthy, like the love of the Messenger of God ﷺ for Aisha, or for Abu Bakr ؓ. This was restricted because it only happened because of the particular connection between the two people from its emergence, temperament and spiritual outlook. Therefore, it did not go away and does not change in one world or another.

As for the love of prominence: the reason for its delay in its exit from the heads of the righteous (*siddiqun*) is because, of all other reprehensible attributes, souls have much adoration for it. Indeed, when Almighty Allah provides care for His servant, He constantly cleanses his *nafs* of all vices. And then after the *nafs* is deprived of all reproachable qualities and the son of Adam ؑ has learned from his *nafs* divine qualities hitherto unknown to him, there begins to be manifested in this servant a love of power and domination - not because of arrogance and disdain towards others, but because this attribute is inherent in his Lord.

As for the love of wealth, with the attainment of knowledge of Allah, such love is converted into the love for the sake of Almighty Allah. For you see such servants are not able to evade the love of worldly riches, as such feelings are instilled in them from birth by natural disposition. Consequently, those who have attained knowledge of Allah become mindful of the following hadith: “Truly, charitable gifts (*sadaqa*) reach Merciful Allah.” That is, such servants love worldly wealth with the aim of giving it away in charity.

As for the love of children, God has made children one of the greatest tests of Almighty Allah for His servants in determining whether parental love can become a hindrance in setting the limits that God has decreed for his child, notwithstanding a parent’s concern and compassion towards his child. This is the greatest test, as Almighty Allah created a child as an independent creature, independent of its father, although the child is not a stranger to its

parent. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ indicated this in the following way, “I swear by Allah, that even if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad, stole, I would cut off her hand.”

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that one who takes into proper account these four sorts of temptations cannot be endangered by the use of worldly goods. So beware, O Muslims, of accusing the close servants of Allah of having possessions because of love for the worldly, as you do. Truly, this is disrespectful of the righteous.

THE MEASURE OF VALUES

Recognising all said above, test yourselves, O Muslims, with the words of the Almighty (meaning), “The Hereafter is much better and much more durable.” (Sura al-A`la, ayah 17) and with the words of the Prophet ﷺ, “Wealth does not decrease from (*sadaqa*) charity” and “A servant who forgives injustice against him will certainly be elevated”; “The reward for a person’s charitable sacrifice is multiplied seven hundred or more times” and “Even if all the djinns and people were to band together to deprive a servant of an iota of his sustenance, they would be unable to do anything.” When the worldly shuns you and you find your *nafs* contented and loving him who deprived you of your worldly lot which you claimed as yours, then you are a believer in that.

I will teach you a precise, highly accurate measure with which to differentiate between the worldly and the hereafter. Know that everything that leads people to trouble and disturbance - and because of which they argue and litigate amongst themselves and compete - is considered as the worldly which the Almighty has ordered us to reject. Verily, the deeds of the eternal life are not associated with the worldly and there is no dispute in them. These deeds include: fasting during the day; praying at night; abundant alms; building wells and other similar deeds performed on the path of Allah. In such matters, people do not compete with each other, with the exception, for example, of teaching and sheikhdom or being occupied in similar endeavors through which one can get

resources, gifts or even broaden one's own popularity. That is, competition is necessarily present in worldly benefits.

Once, a certain person heard how in a monastery a monk said to a church attendant, "How weak a person you are in faith and slack in goodness! It is as if you wanted to gain something of the worldly through this work, as Muslims do!"

However, it is indeed known that the Prophet ﷺ was shy about demanding agreed-upon payment due him after the completion of his work. Once, a certain man was grazing sheep with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and turned to the Prophet ﷺ with the request, "O Muhammad, ask Khadija for the payment we have made." The Prophet ﷺ replied, "I am embarrassed to ask for it."

Truly, scholars should turn away from the worldly and be free from the captivity of love for high status and power, from greed for worldly wealth and the glorification of their ego. Only then will they become true scholars of the eternal life and heirs of the prophets, whose ink will outweigh the blood of martyrs on the Day of Judgment. They will become those of whom it is said, "A scholar's dream is worship of Allah." And they are the ones who in their view admired the beauty and radiance of eternal life and recognise all the ugliness and abomination of the worldly (*dunya*). So they looked at the afterworld with the view of perpetuity and they saw the world as marked by the ephemeral and annihilation, so undoubtedly, they escaped from the mortal and accepted the eternal. This is because this world and the hereafter are like two wives. If one of them is satisfied, the other will be angry. If the world is dear, so the hereafter will be despised, and if the world is despised, so the hereafter will be beloved. And the combination of these two matters is unlikely just like the collection of opposites.⁴²

42 Just as something cannot be white and black at the same time, it is also impossible that for a person the values of the worldly and the eternal life could be equal. - Ed.

THE PROPHET'S ﷺ RENUNCIATION

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most detached from the worldly of all people. Thus, Almighty Allah offered the Prophet ﷺ gold, silver and an emerald the size of Mount Tihama and that this wealth would accompany him everywhere. But Muhammad ﷺ did not want this and said, “O Allah! I will stay hungry one day and another day replete.” The Prophet ﷺ also said, “I would not have been happy to possess a whole mountain of gold the size of Uhud, if three days later even just one coin remained from it, except for the one that I would have saved in order to pay off my debts.” The Prophet ﷺ did not like to retain for himself anything of the worldly. Even if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ possessed gold the size of Mount Uhud, he would distribute this wealth amongst Muslims and would not leave anything for himself other than that necessary to repay a debt.

The Prophet ﷺ also drew the attention of Muslims to the essence of love, saying that no servant could achieve perfection in faith until his heart was crowned with love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and this love was made higher than any other. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ said, “There will be no one amongst you whose faith is complete until you love me more than your family, children and all of humanity.”

Then the Prophet ﷺ explained to the Muslims that passion for the worldly demeans a person and causes greed, as a seeker of the worldly cannot be satisfied with it no matter how much he is given. The Prophet ﷺ also said, “If a son of Adam ﷻ possessed two valleys full of gold, he would then want a third, and if he owned three, he definitely would want yet a fourth. Nothing fills the eye of the son of Adam ﷻ but dust.”⁴³

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was also concerned that every Muslim should be chaste and tried to instruct each servant of Almighty Allah to look down on worldly riches and realise his own dignity and honour above that of the worldly. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Truly, alms cleanse people of impurities and sins.” This saying of the Prophet ﷺ clearly points to the need for the soul of the

43 Until they die or never. – Ed.

believer to be dignified, noble and cleansed of the desire for what others possess; not showing his poverty and needs except to the one Almighty Allah.

The Prophet ﷺ also taught believers that renunciation of the worldly is the gateway to the love of Allah and the love of people. This is because people do not like a person who covets that which they possess. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Renounce the worldly and Allah will love you. Renounce what people have and they will love you.” Therefore, theological scholars say this, “O my brother, if you want to help a person by turning to a ruler, official or others, first renounce the worldly. Let your name not be listed among those receiving gifts and donations. I guarantee you respect in their hearts and the esteem of everyone who sees you” In the Holy Scripture Almighty Allah established asceticism’s general principle (meaning), “Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body.” (Sura al-Ahzab, ayah 4). By this, it is confirmed that the love of the worldly *dunya* can never be combined in the heart of a servant with the love of Almighty Allah and seeking of His pleasure.

THE FRUITS OF ASCETICISM

Know that Almighty Allah will place riches in his heart of whoever abstains from this world and the world will be compelled to come to him. How beautifully one of the pious declared in addressing Allah, “Oh God, what did he find who has lost You and what did he lose who found You? Truly, he who has been content with anything other than You has suffered misfortune and he who has resorted to anyone else has experienced loss.”

Once a certain man saw Ibrahim ibn Adham ؑ mending his clothes and asked him, “O Ibrahim, what did Allah give you in place of power in Balkh?” Ibrahim ؑ replied, “Almighty Allah has given me something that your reason will not be in a condition to grasp. But, nevertheless, I will reveal for you some of that given to me so that you will be able to understand.” Then Ibrahim ؑ threw a needle into the sea and prayed to Allah that He would return it. And in an instant whales appeared, each holding a golden needle in its

mouth. Ibrahim ؑ said, “Oh my Lord, I wanted nothing other than my need!” And addressing the man, Ibrahim ؑ continued, “This is of what Almighty Allah granted to me that you understand.”

CHAPTER 6

TRUTHFULNESS (SIDQ)

THE MEANING OF TRUTHFULNESS

Verily, truthfulness is the foundation of the Sufi path, through it comes its order and by it comes its perfection. Truthfulness is the degree which comes immediately after the rank of prophethood. And the minimal requirement for trustfulness is that ones' inner being and outward actions are in harmony. There also are *siddiqun*⁴⁴ - those who are truthful in all their words, deeds and spiritual states. Know that truthfulness is when one's innermost thoughts are in harmony with one's speech. A truthful person is one who would not be concerned if any respect for him disappeared from the hearts of people as long as his own heart remained virtuous. A really truthful person (*siddiq*) would not want people to notice even a tiny modicum of his good deeds and does not care if people notice any of his wrongdoings. Imam al-Junaid ؑ said, “Truthfulness is to be honest in a situation in which nothing but lying can save you. Mendacity is speech that is proscribed by the Shari`a and reproached by human nature.”

THE EXCELLENCE OF TRUTHFULNESS

Verily, one's manner of speaking is a value, it is a person's dignity and one who moderates his language increases his merit. To clarify the values of truthfulness, the following sayings of the Prophet ﷺ suffice for us, “Reject what induces doubt in you, in favour of that you do not doubt. Indeed, truth is tranquility for the heart and falsehood instills doubt.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also noted, “Verily, truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise, and falsehood leads to immorality, and immorality leads to Hellfire.”

⁴⁴ *Siddiq* (truthful one) is the title given to a person known for his utmost honesty.

When Luqman al-Hakim ؑ was asked, “By what have you achieved this status?” he answered, “Truthfulness in speech and forsaking what does not concern me.”

Theological scholars were in general agreement that the salvation of the *nafs* lies in truthfulness, even though this may bring a person difficulties and sometimes even punishment. They noted, “Adhere to truthfulness, for when you fear that it will harm you, it will benefit you. Abandon falsehood, for when you expect to benefit from it, it will certainly harm you.”

No matter how much a merchant may believe that, by lying, he will sell his merchandise well, he is very mistaken. In a tradition from the Companions it is said, “A truthful merchant will never be destitute.”

THE HARM OF FALSEHOOD

The Prophet ﷺ severely warned against lying, explaining to us that all qualities may be found in a Muslim but not that of lying. Indeed, a Muslim does not lie.

Abu al-Darda ؓ asked, “O Messenger of Allah, can a believer steal?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “It may occur.” Then Abu al-Darda ؓ again asked, “Can a believer commit fornication?” To this the Prophet ﷺ replied, “Yes, even if Abu al-Darda hated it.” The companion asked, “And can a believer lie?” He ﷺ said: “Only those who do not believe forge a lie.” And in another narration, “No, only those who do not believe invent a lie.”

The Prophet ﷺ particularly warned against those who fabricate lies at gatherings in order to make people laugh. He said, “Woe to him who speaks to people and tells lies in order to make them laugh. Woe upon him! Woe upon him!” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also clarified that lying is only admissible in three situations: in war, for war is deception; when someone is reconciling two people; and by one wanting to make peace with his wife. There is no doubt that lying is the gateway to all sins. Truly, mendacity is the most dangerous and repugnant of qualities.

It is reported that someone came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “I was afflicted with three sins, for which I cannot be patient: lying, adultery and drinking alcohol.” Then the Prophet ﷺ said to him, “Refuse to utter falsehoods!” The man then left. When indeed it happened that he wanted to commit adultery again, he said to himself, “If I commit the sin of adultery then the Prophet ﷺ will ask me if I did. If I confess, he will punish me and if I lie, I will break my promise.” So he abandoned this sin. But soon he wanted to drink some wine. And again he thought it over and abandoned this sin. It was then that he realised that lying is the root of all sins.

Muhammad ibn al-Harawi ؒ said, “Two qualities are the greatest calamities for a person: abandoning truth, knowing the reward for it and uttering falsehoods, while knowing its punishment.”

STATEMENTS ABOUT TRUTHFULNESS

Many precious words have been said about truthfulness and its magnificence. Here are some of them:

1. Shaiq al-Balkhi ؒ said, “The likeness of a truthful, honest *murid* is that of a man who planted a date palm and is afraid that thorns will grow on it instead of fruit. And the likeness of a lying *murid* is that of a man who planted a thorny bush and demands that it bring forth dates.”

2. When Abu al-Fath al-Musili ؒ was asked about truthfulness, he thrust his hand into a blacksmith’s forge and took out a piece of hot iron and held it in his palm, saying, “This is what truthfulness is!”

3. It was also said that, “A truthful person is one who is ready to die, not being ashamed of exposing his innermost secrets. Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Wish for death, if you are truthful.” (Sura al-Jum`ah, ayah 6) If a servant is honest and sincere in his preparation for death, then no matter what the time of his death, he will not experience anxiety, as he has nothing to be ashamed of before Almighty Allah.

4. Dhul-Nun al-Misri ؒ said, “Truthfulness is the sword of Allah, that cuts through everything it strikes.”

5. One of the scholars also said, “Performance of scheduled religious obligations will not be accepted from one who does not fulfill his perpetual religious obligation.”

And when he was asked what that perpetual obligation is, he replied, “Truthfulness.”

6. Another righteous person said, “Eagerness to take an oath before it is demanded is the sign of the liar.”

7. It was also said that, “A person who is deceptive to himself or to others will never gain a modicum of truthfulness.”

8. The following explanation was given for the words of Almighty Allah (meaning), “O believers, fear Allah and be with the truthful ones.” (Sura at-Tawbah, ayah 119) O believers from among the people of the Scriptures, abide with truthful Muslims: that is be persistent in this world in faith through truth and tomorrow, after death, you will find yourself in Paradise with truthful Muslims.

9. Theological scholars also say, “Truthfulness is the highest degree of blessed states. This means remaining in one and the same state both inwardly and outwardly, which is a rarity.”

Truthfulness can occur both in words and in spiritual states and this is the most perfect of its forms.

CHAPTER 7

PATIENCE AND ABSTAINING FROM AIDING THE NAFS

THE ESSENCE OF PATIENCE (SABR)

Patience is forbearance, resolute endurance, abandonment of complaints, self-control, suppression of anger, courage and magnanimity of the heart. Dhul-Nun al-Misri ؒ said, “Patience is avoiding transgressions of the Shari’a, keeping quietude while engulfed by misfortunes, showing detachment when poverty invades one’s livelihood and seeking help from Almighty Allah.”

A sign of patience is for a servant to be among his friends and you cannot differentiate between them and him even though he is immersed in affliction. It is also said that the sign of patience is that blessings and afflictions are equal to him.

THE VIRTUE AND REWARD OF PATIENCE

Almighty Allah singled out those who are patient with great reward and said (meaning), “Certainly, those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure.” (Sura al-Zumar, ayah 10) Almighty Allah instructed the Prophet ﷺ (meaning), “Show becoming patience.” (Sura al-Ma`arij, ayah 5) Manifestation of becoming patience is when a person suffering misfortune behaves amongst others as usual: that is, no one knows about his inner concerns and troubles. Thus Almighty Allah commanded believers to exercise patience with their *nafs*, as well as in their relations with others, saying (meaning), “O you who believe, be patient, compete with each other in patience, and strengthen each other in protecting the faith and its requirements.” (Sura al-Imran, ayah 200) The Almighty also said that a servant is unable to show patience, if Allah does not render His support (meaning), “And be patient. Your patience is bestowed by none but Allah.” (Sura an-Nahl, ayah 127)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained the excellence of patience by saying, “Patience is half of faith and conviction and certainty (*yaqin*) is the whole of faith.” He ﷺ also said, “Displaying patience during misfortunes and contentment with them is more valued than the freeing of servants.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “What wonderful weapons for a Muslim are patience and supplication to the Lord.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The most valued worship of the Almighty is the anticipation of relief after falling into difficulties.”⁴⁵

The companion Ali ibn Abu Talib ؓ said, “Patience is for faith what the head is for the body.”⁴⁶

45 i.e., the manifestation of patience and resignation when troubles and misfortunes overtake one.

46 i.e., a person’s faith is imperfect in the absence of patience.

BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT PATIENCE

The following words have been conveyed from theological scholars, explaining the essence and value of exercising patience. Here are some of these statements:

1. Junaid al-Baghdadi ؓ said, “Patience is drinking down bitterness without grimacing.”

2. Ibn Ataillah ؓ said, “Patience is to show good manners in the face of affliction.”⁴⁷

3. It was also said that, “Patience is the ability to behave during afflictions that have befallen in the same way as in wellness.”

4. Al-Khawwas ؓ noted, “Patience is steadfastness in observing the ordinances of the Quran and *Sunna*.”

5. Ali ibn Abu Talib ؓ said, “Patience is a mount that does not stumble.”

THE NATURES OF PATIENCE

Patience has many forms:

1. Patience relating to *nafs*. Sheikh ash-Shazali ؓ said, “He who wants to break away from a bad friendship, let him begin with his *nafs* and forsake its bad manners, for his *nafs* is closest to him and the closest is more deserving of being commanded about that which is reputable.”

2. Patience in the face of affliction: that you do not object to the predestinations of Almighty Allah. As for withstanding affliction without complaining, this does not negate patience. Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ said, “If patience and gratitude were two camels, I would not care which one of them I rode.” When the Messenger of God ﷺ was asked about faith, he said, “Patience and generosity”.

3. Patience with the insolvent. The Prophet ﷺ said: Patience with one who is insolvent is a charity with which God repels seventy gateways of affliction on behalf of himself, his children and his money.

47 i.e., to be content with any decision of Allah and to not complain.

4. The patient dismissal of harm caused by people. This is one of the most significant types of patience, the value of which scholars noted and its gravity explained by the Sufis, because it occupies an important place on the pathway to knowledge of Allah.

THE VIRTUE OF HAVING PATIENCE TO HARM INFLICTED BY PEOPLE

Know that it is the duty of a *murid* to think positively of his brother and as long as the *murid* has a bad opinion of any creature, it is evidence of his inward impurity. And when a *murid* tries to defend his *nafs* and gratify it, know that God Almighty does not want to qualify him to be one of the people of His presence. For example, when the *tabi`un*⁴⁸ were oppressed, they were in no hurry to respond even with negative pleas against their oppressors, for they had reached the level of those who knew Almighty Allah. And if one of the *tabi`un* was to appeal in prayer against his oppressors, this was only with Allah's permission and not because of his own wrath or plight.

Ash-Shazali رحمته الله said, "Once I thought of appealing in prayer against an oppressor, but I began to doubt the permissibility of such a prayer. After that I saw in a dream my spiritual mentor رحمته الله and he told me, "If you want destruction of an oppressor, do not haste, for the rush to destroy enemies and the desire of victory for allies comes from hidden lust. And who is more unjust than he who disputes the will of his Master and follows his own desires and whims?"

It is known that, if a *murid* defends his *nafs* and complies with it, he and dust are equal and that whoever gratified his *nafs* has perished with those who perish, and whoever is content with his *nafs* has suffered a definite loss.

The number of people who disagree has increased a hundredfold, leading to schism in society. We ask you to excuse those envious people who fight with you and to leave them fruitlessly, as a caution to allies against touching the dark breath of the innovators, who think that they are among the intelligent. They criticise with their corrupt understandings what they do not

48 A generation of Muslims who met and studied with the companions of the Prophet ﷺ.

understand and they engage in vain talks with their lack of piety in what they do not know. Neither do they stop at the text of the Quran nor do they conform to what was narrated from the master of the sons of Adnan ﷺ nor do they incline to a path that is based on the law of truth and knowledge of Allah.

The goal of that said above is that one shows patience and relies only on Allah in all matters, for Allah is Sufficient for us, most Excellent is He in Whom we trust and He is the best disposer of affairs. And for every Musa ﷺ a pharaoh is necessary. Allah prevails over everything.

PEOPLE'S NEED TO BE PATIENT TOWARDS HARM

Know, O Muslims, that in our time it is necessary to exercise special patience towards the evil emanating from people. And remember that against whoever causes evil and even against one who contributes to this, Almighty Allah will certainly send power which they cannot resist. Therefore, every servant must ask Almighty Allah for wellness and protection against people and their discord. But, as religious science teaches us, if a servant of Allah becomes embroiled in trouble through no fault of his own, the worthy and correct action is to respond to evil with beneficence. And in the absence of the strength to do so, he must try to forgive the oppressors, thereby displaying tolerance towards them, so that, aided by such manifestation of patience, the fire of the discord may be extinguished. But if a servant of Allah is unable to achieve this, it will be necessary for him, to be patient for the course of predestination to be established – without taking any measure to do harm in return. If, even so, the fire of unrest engulfs the servant of Allah, then this should be withstood only in the best manner, i.e. aided by gentleness and kindness. If this remains impossible, then it is appropriate to simply abandon the contentious situation altogether. Whenever, if the obstacles prevent him from traveling, a servant of Allah is unable to do this, let him deflect the least harm in the least possible way, and let him do it openly. Let him invoke secretly, repeatedly and constantly, praying to Almighty Allah to repel the evil of oppressors from him until the Creator accepts his

prayer and eases his fate. Observance of all the above-mentioned norms is required of us by our religious knowledge.

And may the sincere worshipper be on guard against his own irascibility, which emanates from inner vehemence. It is darkness of ignorance and self-esteem which demands the expression of retaliatory evil so insistently. Be aware that a sea of harm from others will spill over onto whomever hastens to respond to evil with evil, even if he be of those oppressed. Such a servant will suffer spiritual perdition in both worlds. All this will serve as punishment for the fact that at a time of tribulation, the servant did not resort to the help of Almighty Allah. However, if he had resorted to God Almighty by pleading and complaining, and admitted his inability and weakness, God Almighty would have repelled from him the harm of people without reason, or for a fatigueless reason, or God Almighty would have preoccupied them with a preoccupation they are unable to avoid. Either God will do this for him, or He will descend upon him great grace, and becoming patience. So he endures the sufferings of those evils with that grace and patience until he receives relief from God Almighty and he will be rewarded in this world and another. As for the reward of this world it is by the praise of the outcome and the manifestation of his patience with people according to his rank. As for the reward of the Hereafter, it is by gaining that which has no end in reward for the patient ones, which God Almighty has promised. The Creator said (meaning), “And the fair word of your Lord was fulfilled for the children of Israel, because of their patience.” (Sura al-A`raf, ayah 137)⁴⁹ The Almighty also said (meaning), “But if you endure patiently, verily it is better for the patient.” (Sura al-Nahl, ayah 126) There are also many other ayat in the Holy Quran that talk of patience.

Since people did not consider what we have mentioned, you will always see people in great torment from suffering the evils of one another and thus they have fallen into great perils in this world and the hereafter, except for those who are surrounded by great care from God Almighty. The common people do not see in moving evil upon them anything but the image of the person who

49 This refers to the promise of Almighty Allah to the Banu (sons) of Israel of victory over the enemy and of providing them with opportunities to live on earth. (Sura Qasas, ayat 5-6).

stirred it upon them, due to their absence from the remembrance of Almighty Allah and from most of His wisdom. Such people will certainly attempt to rebel against evil that overtakes them by employing their own strengths and the cunning and power of their own *nafs*. As a consequence, they will be made to suffer all the malevolence brought on by others and will remain long confined in the gloom of spiritual blindness as a punishment.

As for the astute and wise person, he fully recognises that all evil caused by people is the predestination of Almighty Allah, whom no one has the power to oppose. Therefore, the knowledge of a submissive servant teaches and requires him to constantly turn in prayer for assistance to Almighty Allah only, while recognising his own weakness and impotence. Thus such a son of Adam ﷺ firmly cleaves to the authority of Almighty Allah, which protects from all evil: there is no doubt that a servant of Allah will be able without any difficulty to repulse evil emanating from others when such evil occurs. Be aware, that even if he were enflamed by evil emanating from others, this could not harm a servant who resorted to Almighty Allah's aid. This is because no one and nothing has power over a servant who hopes only in the Creator.

The need for patience tests everyone nowadays. Whoever continues to follow this method will be happy in this world and the hereafter, and whoever departs from it, God Almighty entrusts him to himself, so he rises to meet the evils with his power and deception. So all doomed will perish sooner or later, therefore let the matter be referred to Almighty Allah before people know about it. Such is the prescription of Almighty Allah applying to those who, at the very initiation of their affairs, turn to Him for help. Follow this path for it is precious gold and quick relief. And, indeed, it is assisted by patience.

WHAT REINFORCES PATIENCE

The Prophet ﷺ has shown us prayers of remembrance that help a Muslim to exercise patience. He ﷺ said, "Whoever reads ten laudatory prayers following every dawn prayer will find Allah satisfied and solicitous of him. Five of these prayers relate to a person's worldly life and the other five to the eternal life:

1. “*Hasbiya-Llahu li dini*” (“Allah is sufficient for me in my religion”);
2. “*Hasbiya-Llahu liman ahammani*” (“Allah is sufficient for what I care about.”);
3. “*Hasbiya-Llahu liman bagha `alaiyya*” (“Allah is sufficient for me against someone who oppresses me.”);
4. “*Hasbiya-Llahu liman hasadani*” (“Allah is sufficient for me against someone who is envious of me.”);
5. “*Hasbiya-Llahu liman kadani bisu’in*” (“Allah is sufficient for me against someone who is on the verge of harming me.”);
6. “*Hasbiya-Llahu `indal-mawti*” (“Allah is sufficient for me at death.”);
7. “*Hasbiya-Llahu `indal mas’alati fil-qabri*” (“Allah is sufficient for me during the questioning in the grave.”);
8. “*Hasbiya-Llahu `indal-mizani*” (“Allah is sufficient for me at the scales on the Day of Judgment.”);
9. “*Hasbiya-Llahu `inda ssirati*” (“Allah is sufficient for me at the bridge of Sirat.”);
10. “*Hasbiya-Llahu lailaha illa huwa `alaihi tawakkaltu wahuwa rabbul `arshil `azim wa ilaihi unib*” (“Allah is sufficient for me and there is nothing worthy of worship except Him and only in Him I trust, He is the Lord of the Supreme Throne and to Him I repent.”)

The Prophet ﷺ conveys the words of Almighty Allah in the holy hadith, “By My Might and Greatness when one of My servants resorts to My help sincerely and with conviction in his heart, I will certainly render him assistance, even though all the inhabitants of the earth and heaven may plot ill against him.”

It is transmitted on the authority of Anas ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ most frequently used to recite, “*Allahumma atina fi-ddunya hasanatan wa fil-`akhirati hasanatan wa qina `azaba-nnar*” (“O my Allah, bestow on us all that is good in this world and in the eternal world and save us from the fire of Hell.”).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever reads the ayah al-Kursi and the last two ayat of the Sura al-Baqarah while experiencing worries and affliction, Almighty Allah will help him.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said, “I know certain words the uttering of which will give relief to the sorrowful. These are words which my brother, the prophet Yunus ؑ, uttered while in deep darkness,⁵⁰ “*La ilaha illa anta, subhanaka, inni kuntu mina zzalimin*” (“There is nothing worthy of worship except You, You are pure of all that is unworthy and I was from among those who oppressed themselves.”), (for, getting angry with my people, I left them without Your permission). The Prophet ﷺ explained this thus, “The Prophet Yunus ؑ, being in the belly of a whale, turned to his Lord with the prayer, “*La ilaha illa anta, subhanaka, inni kuntu mina zzalimin*”. The Almighty Creator will surely respond to every Muslim who feels need and turns to Him with this prayer.

DOMINANCE ONLY TO ALLAH

Know that all matters are only within the power of Almighty Allah and that all people are merely bodies and images, which He moves about as He wishes. Whoever is mindful of this truth will not become angry with anyone who bears him harm, for he knows that the true Author of all things is Almighty Allah and no-one else.

The pole of the righteous (*qutb*) Sheikh Abdulwahhab ash-Sha`rani ؒ in his book, “Al-Minan Al-Kubra”, writes, “Of what Almighty Allah has bestowed upon me is my promptness to seek an excuse for anyone who harms me, not blaming him and not responding to evil with like evil. This is because I know that no one could harm me by word or by deed, if it were not by the will of Almighty Allah and if I had not fallen into sin which necessitated this harm. That is, the aspiration of my sight is the presence of the Divine Will rather than the presence of creation. Whoever has such an outlook on events should not be upset and angry at one who inflicts harm on him, for the predestination of Almighty Allah should not induce anger. The lack of any sense of vexation towards those committing evil derives from the recognition that everything, both in movement and in repose, is through divine will. That is, people

⁵⁰ The darkness of night, sea water and the belly of a whale.

who do evil are like a whip with which one unjustly strikes another. A rational person does not attribute a whipping to the whip, but recognises that the whipping is done by the real actor. As for the absence of any anger towards the predestination of Almighty Allah, this is because he testifies that this is an act of the most Wise, and most Knowledgeable, Who is more merciful than his mother in revealing and witnessing.”

From this it is clear that hatred towards a person who commits evil can only be felt by one who is wrongly convinced that all deeds are committed by people. Just think how the heart of a servant, who has fallen into sin and is discredited in the eyes of people, may be torn apart from intense pounding and severe regret for a sin committed. If, however, he is indeed sure that Almighty Allah had predetermined this for him even before his birth, this will relieve the pain. Whoever realises that in both worlds there is only one Actor, the Great Allah, also does well as such a person enjoys everything that happens to him. This is similar to the ruling in the case of the angels (*zabaniya*) of Hell on the Day of Judgment, that when the shrouds are removed from all sinners and they are revealed to all, none of them will attribute any deed to the angels of punishment and will not accuse them of oppression but will rather see the angels as fulfilling that which they are commanded to do. A righteous person perceives everyone who oppresses him in this life as acting according to the Almighty’s predestination. That is to say, such a servant of Allah will never prescribe violence to others, with the exception of *taklif*, that is being commissioned for the fulfillment of the commands and prohibitions prescribed by the Almighty.

Imam ash-Sha`rani ؒ also said, “One of the blessings which Almighty Allah has bestowed upon me is that I do not weary my heart by devising wiles against those who have caused me evil in word or deed, as many do. Indeed, some do not even sleep at night, trying to come up with at least some ploy to avenge themselves against their enemy.”

O Muslims, it will be no secret for you that the worst deed a scholar or righteous person can commit is evil in retaliation; this is

as well as the disclosure of someone's failings, even if they be true – not to speak of false testimony or defamation. Indeed, Almighty Allah conceals and loves from among His servants those who conceal. Therefore, just as Allah, Blessed and Exalted be He, sees the fault of His servant and conceals it, so it is fitting for His servant to do the same.

Along with the concealment of failings, the ethical norm includes tolerance towards the actions of adversaries, as well as appeal through prayer to Almighty Allah for their forgiveness. Ali al-Khawwas rahimahullah said, “When someone has hurt or humiliated you in front of others, consider this to be a reminder from the Almighty that you should reflect on your sins. Start sincerely repenting and regretting your omissions and disobedience. Beware of dwelling on the flaws of someone who has humiliated you.”

Know, O Muslims, that if you had not estranged yourself from the presence of the Almighty Lord, no one would have authority over you. This is because no djinns or people have a way against those who are close to Almighty Allah and know that He watches over them.

Imam ash-Sha`rani rahimahullah also writes, “One of the blessings Almighty Allah has bestowed on me is that if someone oppresses me, I blame only myself and do not criticise the predestinations of Almighty Allah.” From this it is clear that no tyrant oppresses us unless this is because of our sins. And this, in fact, is retribution for our own deeds and not oppression. If the veils of our hearts were delicate enough, we would see the ruling in the case of the oppressors in this world as being exactly the same as that of the angels who torment the inhabitants of Hell. But it is necessary to attribute injustice to those who wronged us in this world because of the attribution of responsibility for, unlike the angels of Hell, they are not in the world of obligation.

Let whoever does not desire misfortune and does not want to be oppressed close the gates through which bad recompense enters. This is achieved by abandoning disobedience altogether.⁵¹

⁵¹ Sometimes a slave suffers misfortune as a punishment for his misconduct and sins. Sometimes trials are sent down for the expiation and cleansing of his wicked deeds and

Theological scholars said, “When a rational person wants to clean a well of fetid water, he must first block the gutter through which the water enters and only then drain it. Otherwise, everything he drained will be replenished by more water pouring down from the gutter. Accordingly, there is no better medicine for whoever complains that he is being oppressed than frequent repentance (*tawba*). And for whoever has caused the anger of his Lord, there is also no better remedy than the asking of forgiveness.”

From the above it is clear that a sinner’s excuse, “What can I do, as it was predetermined for me before my birth” is a manifestation of disregard for Almighty Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He. For in these words there is an odour of unwillingness to put the blame on one’s disobedience.

Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمته الله said, “Of what Allah Almighty has bestowed upon me is lack of concern in reacting against someone who has harmed or humiliated me. Rather, I set about examining my *nafs* and increase asking the Creator for forgiveness. I occupy myself with Almighty Allah and recognise that I find myself before Him and that He observes everything His servants do to me. Whoever looks on happenings in this way can patiently bear the harmfulness of all djinns and people. I also know that Almighty Allah never empowers people to inflict harm on a person whose heart is focused on Him and that no one has been subjected to harm except for his heedlessness of Him.

Therefore, theological scholars noted, “When people are preoccupied with you, try to be preoccupied with their Lord. Verily, the reins of their deeds are in His power. Do not try to resist them, otherwise you will exhaust yourself and bring even greater evil upon yourself.”

sometimes to elevate his degree before God until he approaches the levels and spiritual states of the five prophets who are especially revered. Lack of patience for these troubles is a sign that trials are a punishment. A sign that these adversities are prescribed for the atonement of sins is the presence of patience without complaining and revealing anxiety before friends and neighbors. And a sign that this is for the elevation of the degree of closeness to Allah is contentment and tranquility of the soul.

EXCESSIVE HARM IS A SIGN OF THE HOUR

The Prophet ﷺ said that one of the signs that the end of the world is approaching is an escalation in evil and the spread of violence amongst people. Therefore, it is necessary to exercise patience, as the Prophet ﷺ bequeathed to his companions when they asked him for a testament. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The End of the World has signs.” One of the companions asked, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, what are its signs?” He replied, “A swelling in the voices of immorality (*fisq*) in mosques and the domination of people of vice over the righteous.” Then one of the Bedouins asked, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, what do you command me to do (in such a situation)?” The Prophet ﷺ answered, “Leave what is forbidden and take what is virtuous and stay at home.”

In another tradition it is said that someone asked the Prophet ﷺ, “O Prophet of Allah ﷺ, how do you command us to behave if we are ruled by people who demand of us observance of their own rights and deprive us of our own?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “Obey them and submit to them. Truly, the responsibility to observe justice is allocated to them (and if otherwise, the sin for this rests with them), and upon you is placed the responsibility to obey them and submit to them (in the observance of which Almighty Allah will bestow blessed recompense upon you). Render them that which they unjustly require of you and do not demand of them that they fulfill their obligations to you. If they do not respect your rights, do not fight with them but ask Allah for rewards for what they require of you. They will be required for what they do and you for what you do.”

The Prophet ﷺ warned, “You will be governed by rulers who will perform both good deeds and those not corresponding with the Shari`a. Whoever rejects their reprehensible deeds will be cleared of sin for them and whoever is discontented in their hearts with such evil will also be saved. However, those who are satisfied with their conduct and follow them will be accomplices in their sins.” The companions asked, “But do we fight not with them?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “No, as long as they perform prayer. As long as they perform prayer!”

In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ has informed us about the rulers of times approaching the end of the world. Some of their deeds will be good and some will be bad. Whoever, with his tongue, can reject their reproachful deeds which are not in accordance with the Shari`a will be cleared of hypocrisy. Whoever rejects their wicked deeds in his heart and hates them will be saved from complicity in their sins. But whoever is content with their evil and follows them in what is unworthy are accomplices in sin and will be punished.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said, “In the last days (before the Day of Judgment) people will appear whose faces are human but who have devilish hearts. They will be like predatory wolves, their hearts will be absolutely devoid of mercy and they will be a disgusting abomination that does not turn away from what is disgraceful. If you follow them, they will ride upon you, and if you hide away from view, they will malign you. If they talk with you, they will lie to you and if you trust them, they will betray you. Their children are malevolent, their youth are devils and their elderly will not call upon you to do good and will not deter you from evil. Taking pride in them is debasement and seeking what is in their hands is destitution.

For them a meek person is one who has gone astray and is pursuing his desires, one who is truthful is suspected, a true believer is despised and a wicked person is revered. The *Sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ among them is an innovation and innovation among them is *Sunna*. During this period, whoever is in authority over these people will be the worst of them all. Then the best of them will turn in prayer to Allah but the Lord will not answer them.”

When there are people who violate the covenant with Almighty Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, the Creator will surely direct enemies against them, who will deprive them of their possessions. When their leader does not rule according to the Book of Almighty Allah, the Lord will plunge them into brutal internecine warfare.

The Prophet ﷺ noted, “May whoever wants to avoid the fire of Hell and enter Paradise meet the hour of his death in faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment. And let him relate to others the way he wants them to relate to him.”

A person knows not what the outcome of his life's journey will be; whether he will leave this world in faith or not. Only Almighty Allah knows whether the end of life will be happy or ill-fated. However, the purpose of that presented above is to do what may serve as the reason for his good ending and death having faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment. As is said in a hadith, "A person dies in the state in which he lived. Each servant on the Day of Judgment will be resurrected in that state in which he left this world." Therefore, a servant needs to have a good perception of Almighty Allah, believing that He will bestow upon him a blessed outcome of his life's journey, while at the same time he must adhere to those ways that enable him to do this. He should also endure harm done by others and treat them as he himself would want to be treated. It is proper for him to do good to others; as the Prophet ﷺ said, "All people are wards of Allah and for the Creator the most beloved of them is he who is most beneficial to His wards." The Prophet ﷺ himself guarantees such a person that Almighty Allah will distance him from the fire of Hell and admit him to Paradise.

The Prophet ﷺ also said, "The Day of Judgment will not come until two large groups fight each other. There will be great slaughter among them. Each side will summon others to the same cause (that is, to Islam) and each side will believe that it is right. Also, about 30 *dajjals* - antichrists - will appear, each of whom will assert that he is the messenger of Allah. Also until true religious knowledge will disappear, earthquakes will increase in number, time will pass faster, afflictions will appear, turmoil and killings will increase and your wealth will increase so much so that, because of its abundance, a wealthy person will worry lest nobody should accept his charitable donations (*zakat* and *sadaqa*), and, even if he finds such a person, the latter will tell him, "I have no need of it." And until people will compete in constructing tall houses until a person, when passing by the grave of another, will say, "Oh, would that I were in your place!"

THE GOODNESS IN ENDURING HARM

Know that a hypocrite is a person who complains much, brings little benefit to others and argues a lot. Righteous predecessors bequeathed guidance to their followers that they patiently endure harm from others. One of them said to his student, “Endure the bite of a mosquito and a scorpion so that you can bear harm from others.” Once he saw a *murid* killing a mosquito, and said to him, “How do you pursue the path of the *tariqah* - the path of people close to Allah, while satisfying the desire of your anger by killing a mosquito and not enduring its bite?”

One of the sheikhs said, “The most magnificent virtue of a *murid* is the maintenance of respect for the brothers in faith, to treat them well and not to have any store of clothes, food or money.”

When the righteous ash-Shibli رحمته الله, who was in hospital, was visited by a group of people, he asked them, “Who are you?” They answered, “Visitors who love you.” Then he began to pelt them with stones and they fled. And he said, “O liars, if you loved me, you would have been patient when I tried you!”

One of the righteous said. “If you are able not to get angry with something that is worldly, then be so.”

CHAPTER 8

FEAR AND HOPE

Know that hope is present when there are grounds for salvation and ways for achievement, and vanity is when there are no grounds for success and salvation.

Fear is the lamp which illuminates your heart and by which you can discern the good and the bad in yourself. You should always be in a state between fear of the wrath of Allah and hope for His mercy, so that you will not be deceived (*istidraj*) without being cognizant of it. Such is the testament of the sheikh-mentors, which they transmit to each other. Only the fearful one sees the fearful, for only the mother bereft of her child likes to see other mourning mothers.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He who weeps out of fear of Allah will not enter the Hell as long as milk cannot re-enter the udder.”

Know that everything has its own adornment and the adornment of worship is the fear of Allah. When Iblis was cursed and deprived of the mercy of the Almighty, the angels Jibril and Mika'il wept for the longest time. Then Almighty Allah sent down the revelation, “Why are you two crying so much?” They replied, “O our Lord, we are not sure that we are safe from Your trials (*makr*).” Then the Almighty addressed them with the words, “Stay in this state, not being certain that you are protected from My trials.”

Indeed, a person who has attained spiritual perfection will not be certain of safety from the trials of Allah, no matter to what highest degrees the Creator has brought him. Even if the Almighty had said to him, “I am satisfied with you with My greatest satisfaction,” the fear of Almighty Allah's trials remains inherent to him.

Almighty Allah said (meaning), “And those who give whatever they give, with their hearts full of fear.” (Sura al-Muminun, ayah 60) Scholars commented on this ayah in the following way. It concerns those believers who pay *zakat* and make charitable donations and yet fear in their hearts that Allah will not accept this of them. Even when they perform virtuous acts, their hearts are full of fear, lest their shortfalls should make their deeds disapproved by Allah to whom they are to return. When the companions asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about this ayah, “O Messenger of Allah, are they people such as the man who stole, committed adultery and drank wine?” the Prophet ﷺ replied, “No, it concerns a person who observes fasting, performs *namaz* and distributes charity but is afraid that Allah may not accept this from him.”⁵²

52 For some companions ﷺ the words of the Almighty were unclear when He revealed to them of those who distribute charity and disburse their belongings but at the same time experience fear of the Lord. They supposed that the cause of their fear lies in sins which are an obstacle to the acceptance of their good deeds. However, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained to them that the reason for the fear was not sins but their closeness to Almighty Allah, which intensified their fear of Him, the All-Powerful and Greatest.

Imam ash-Sha`rani ؒ said, “We have vows to incline to weakness in all our states rather than strength and by appreciating the rank of knowledge of Allah. One of the conditions of the knower of Allah is the presence of intense fear. The Prophet ﷺ said, “I am the most knowledgeable of you about Allah and the most fearful of you.”

“They have taken yet another pledge from us, that when affliction overtakes us, to pray to the Almighty for assistance and ask Him to spare us from this misfortune and try not to demonstrate fortitude and patience, as some do. For such fortitude is like resisting divine oppression. But sometimes our pain and illness may intensify such that our patience fails. Then, resorting to our own weakness and not being able to bear it, we ask Almighty Allah for relief. But showing the pain from the bite of a mosquito is worthier, for God Almighty loves when His servants show weakness and ask abundantly for forgiveness and wellness.”

CHAPTER 9

MERCY

O Muslims, know that Almighty Allah is more merciful to His servants than are their parents. Everyone who seeks to receive Allah’s mercy must show mercy to his brother. Ka`b al-Ahbar said that it is written in the Injeel (Gospels), “O son of Adam, as merciful as you are to others, so they will be merciful to you. How can you hope for the mercy of Allah when you yourself do not show mercy towards His servants?”

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah is merciful to those who are merciful to others. Be merciful to those on earth and the Lord of Heaven will be merciful to you.”

O Muslims, be careful not to spurn any sinner when he asks you for medication. The remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) is just such a cure. Imam ash-Sha`rani ؒ said, “He who does not look on the disobedient with a merciful glaze withdraws from the *tariqa*. Never counsel a person to forsake bad deeds until you truly have mercy for him in your heart.”

The Prophet ﷺ gently addressed someone, if he hoped that he might adopt Islam. This is because gentle words provide more hope that a person may accept guidance. It is well known to the people of *tariqah* that the sinner (*fasiq*) is as though a lost stray to every caller to Allah. Wherever he finds one, he picks it up.

The Prophet ﷺ also noted, “A look with love in the face of a brother by faith for the sake of Allah is better than the reward intended for someone for *i`tikaf*⁵³ in my mosque for forty years.”

Truly, the mercy of Almighty Allah is unlimited. The prophet Dawud ؑ conveyed the following words of the Almighty, “To forgive a thousand people is more desirable to Me than to punish one with the fire of Hell, for I am the Forgiver of sins and the Merciful.”

It is said that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and told him, “When on the roof of her house, a woman lost a child which slipped from her grasp. And she, out of compassion for him, threw herself after him.” The Prophet ﷺ then said, “Truly, Allah is more merciful to my community than this woman to her child.”

THE PEOPLE OF TARIQAH ARE THE PEOPLE OF MERCY

Sheikh al-Suhrawardi ؑ in his book “`Awarif Al-Ma`arif” writes, “The very nature of the followers of the *tariqah* is intrinsically manifested in mutual love and sympathy, harmony and accord with brothers in faith and the refutation of dissent between them.”

Describing the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, Almighty Allah said in the Quran (meaning), “They are merciful to one another.” (Sura al-Fath, ayah 92) The Almighty also said (meaning), “If you, O Prophet, were to give all there is on earth, you could not have led their hearts to friendship and reconciliation. Allah, however, brought them to agreement.” (Sura al-Anfal, ayah 36) Truly, mutual love and predisposition arise from the affinity and harmony of souls (*arwah*). This is narrated in a report, “Souls that recognise each other come together, while those who were not familiar with one another,

53 i.e. remaining in a mosque with the purpose of worshipping Allah.

part.” The Prophet ﷺ also said, “A believer is one who is friendly with others and others are friendly with him. There is no good in those who are not friendly and with whom no one is friendly.” The Prophet ﷺ said also, “Two believers when meeting are like two hands, each of which washes the other. When two believers meet, they will surely gain benefit from each other.”

Abu Idris al-Khawlani ؓ told Mu`adh ؓ, “I love you for Allah’s sake.” Then Mu`adh ؓ added, “Rejoice and rejoice again! Truly, I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, ‘On the Day of Judgment, special places will be allocated around the `Arsh (Throne) for a particular group of people. Their faces will emit radiance like a full moon. Other people will seek help but they will not. Others will experience fear but they will not. These are the beloved servants (*awliya*) of Allah. They will not be afraid and will not be sorrowful.’ One of us asked, ‘Who are these people, O Messenger of Allah?’ The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘These are those who loved one another for the sake of Allah.’”

In this sense, the companionship of the followers of the *tariqah* was often influential. This is because when they love each other for Allah’s sake, they counsel each other and show good qualities of their character. And because of love, they accept and embrace this reciprocal friendship. This is how a *murid* benefits from a sheikh-mentor just as brothers in faith benefit from each other. That is why Almighty Allah ordered people to gather five times a day in mosques on every street and in every quarter. And He ordered the inhabitants of every settlement to gather once a week in the main mosque. And on both Muslim holidays⁵⁴ the Creator ordered people to gather in the cities from all around them. And people from all countries gather together at least once in their lives at the time of the observance of the *Hajj*. In all this there is great wisdom, including the strengthening of friendship, concord and love between believers. This is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ noted, “The believer to the believer is like a solid building, one part supporting the other.” A hadith also says, “Understand that, verily, in their love, affection and mercy to each other, believers are like a single body: if one part of it complains

54 i.e. of sacrifice and of the breaking of the fast.

(from an illness), the rest of the body responds with sleeplessness and fever.”

Manifesting mutual goodwill, love and warmth strengthens companionship. Friendship with good people has a positive impact.

CHAPTER 10

JEALOUSY

Know that jealousy is dislike that another should partake in something one possesses. The renowned righteous ash-Shibli رضي الله عنه said, “Jealousy is of two kinds: human jealousy of one another and divine jealousy of their hearts.” Ash-Shibli رضي الله عنه also said, “Divine jealousy is of the breaths of men, lest they be wasted on something other than God Almighty.”

They say, “God’s jealousy of His servant means that He keeps him away from mankind out of His envy for him and the servant’s jealousy of God means that he devotes all his spiritual states and breaths to no one but God Almighty. And jealousy for the sake of God, demands of His servant the maintenance of His rights and purifying his deeds for His sake.

Know that the custom of Almighty Allah in regard to His beloved ones (*awliya*) is as follows: if they permit anything other than the Creator to occupy a place in their hearts or find contentment in other than God and heed other than God, Allah will obstruct them from doing this. The Almighty is so jealous of their hearts - that they be wholly and sincerely addressed to Him and empty of all else that brought them contentment, all else they heeded, and all else they allowed to settle therein. This was the case with the prophet Adam عليه السلام. When Adam عليه السلام prepared to reside eternally in Paradise, Allah expelled him. A similar thing happened with the prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام when he began to admire his son Ismail عليه السلام. Allah ordered him to sacrifice his son so that the feeling of admiration left his heart and when they both surrendered themselves and his heart was purified of his attachment to his son, the Creator ordered the making of a substitute sacrifice of a ram instead of his son.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “No one is more jealous than Almighty Allah and out of His jealousy He forbade indecencies whether apparent or hidden.” The Prophet ﷺ also said, “Truly, Allah is jealous and, truly, the believer is jealous. Allah’s jealousy is aroused when the believing servant commits an act prohibited by the Almighty.” Scholars noted, “The jealousy mentioned in these hadiths describing the Almighty is not the same as that which is intrinsic to people. This is because it is not permissible for Him to have the attributes of inferiority. The attributes of Allah are not similar to those of His creations. Jealousy amongst the Creator’s attributes means reprimanding immoralities, prohibiting and preventing from them. This is because the jealous is the one who reprimands what he is jealous of. This is illustrated by the following words of the Prophet ﷺ, “Because of this jealousy, the Creator forbade all indecencies”; that is, He rebukes them and prevents them. Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Say, O Prophet: truly, my Lord has forbidden indecent acts, whether they be overt or secret.” (Sura al-A`raf, ayah 33)

They say of the righteous as-Sari as-Saqati ؓ that once in his presence they read the words of the Almighty (meaning), “When you, O Prophet, recite the Quran, We place a hidden veil between you and those who do not believe in the eternal life.” (Sura al-Isra, ayah 45) Then as-Sari ؓ asked his companions, “Do you know what this veil is? It is the veil of jealousy. There is no one more jealous than Almighty Allah.” The meaning of the words of as-Sari ؓ “It is the veil of jealousy” is that Almighty Allah never allows unbelievers access to the veracity of religion.⁵⁵

ALMIGHTY ALLAH IS VERY JEALOUS

Almighty Allah, the Exalted, is jealous and from His jealousy He has not made to Him a path other than Himself. And it was said that Almighty Allah revealed to some of His prophets, “When someone is in need of Me and I too have need of him. If he satisfies My need, then I will satisfy his need.” This prophet ﷺ addressed Allah, “O Almighty Allah, how can You have need of anything?” The Almighty

⁵⁵ The Almighty did not make unbelievers comprehending the truth of religion.

then responded (meaning), “The heart of such a person found support in other than Me. May he empty his heart of that so that I can satisfy his need.”

One of the pious said, “When I was wandering in the mountains of Lebanon, a young man suddenly appeared, weather-beaten from sun and wind. As soon as his eyes fell on me, he began to run away, wanting to be alone. I said to him, “Oh my brother, say at least a word of admonition so that I may benefit from it.” Then he quickly turned to me as if he were a fugitive and said, “Beware, for Allah is very jealous. He does not like to see anything other than Himself in the heart of His servant.”

The spiritual mentor Abu `Ali ad-Daqqaq ؓ said, “When a certain Bedouin entered the mosque of the Messenger of God ﷺ and urinated there, the companions hastened to expel him. Abu `Ali ad-Daqqaq ؓ said, “The Bedouin did something indecent. The companions were very upset and embarrassed when they looked upon that depravity. This is the case also with a servant. If he knows the majesty of the Almighty’s power and glory, it is upsetting for him to hear someone make remembrance of God (*dhikr*) vainly, performing it mechanically or to know of someone who performs religious duties without showing proper reverence for Him.”

CHAPTER 11

SELFLESSNESS, MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY

THE ESSENCE OF GENEROSITY

Know that the reality of generosity is that it is not difficult for you to give.

They also said, “Generosity is readiness to sacrifice at its first thought.” The righteous ad- Daqqaq ؓ said, “It is not considered generosity when a rich person gives to the poor. Generosity lies in the needy giving to those who are well off.” Almighty Allah said (meaning), “And those who lived in Medina and were believers before the arrival of the Meccans, love those who emigrated to them from Mecca and

do not feel in their hearts any sort of need for the property given to them and that preference was accorded them over themselves, even though they are in a straitened position. And those who have overcome their greed for worldly wealth will be the successful.” (Sura al-Hashr, ayah 9) This ayah was sent down regarding the Ansars who lived in Medina before the Muhajirs from Mecca migrated to them. The Ansars loved the Meccans who moved to them and were not troubled by any want of a share that was allotted only for the immigrants from Mecca and they were not jealous of them for this. In their hearts there was not the slightest objection to the ruling of Allah in which He favoured the Muhajirs, although the Ansars themselves were in need and in straitened circumstances. It is also said that this ayah was revealed with respect to one of the Medina Muslims who was given a sheep’s head. He went around to seven houses in search of someone to whom he could give it, but the inhabitants of each house suggested that he give it to another; so in the end he returned to the first house. It is also said that this ayah was sent down in relation to yet another person from Medina. When a guest came to visit him, the Ansar set food before him and put out the candle, so that he would think that the owner would also eat with him. So this Ansar gave preference to his guest before himself and his family. And it was in this regard that the ayah was revealed by the Almighty.

They say that, “Magnanimous is one who builds a house for his guests and his brothers, and mean is one who builds one for himself.” They also say, “A selfless person accords preference to a man who has already eaten his full when he himself is hungry.

It is narrated in a hadith that “Never has a people gathered in this world but among them are generous and miserly, except for the Ansar, for they are all generous and are not mean”

The companion Huzayf al-`Adawi ؓ said, “On the day of the battle of Yarmouk, I went in search of my cousin. I had some water with me. When I reached him, I said, ‘I will give you a drink,’ and he nodded his head in agreement. Then we heard the groan of someone dying of thirst. My cousin made a gesture for me to give this man water. It turned out to be Hisham ibn al-`As ؓ. I asked if

I should give him water and he nodded yes. Then Hisham ؓ heard the groan of another dying of thirst and gestured to me to go to him. When I got to him, he had already died. Then I returned to Hisham ؓ but he also had died. Then I returned to my cousin but I found him dead also.” These are examples of the sacrificing of one’s *nafs* in order to save the lives of others. This kind of self-sacrifice is much higher than the sacrifice of property.

In the book “at-Takmilah” it is said, “The most authentic attribution of this ayah is that it was sent down concerning the companion Abu Talha al-Ansari ؓ. When a guest came to visit the Messenger of Allah ﷺ there was nothing at his house with which to treat him. Then the Prophet ﷺ turned to his companions, ‘Is there someone among you who will treat this person? May Allah have mercy on him!’ Then Abu Talha ؓ got up and went home with the guest and said to his wife, ‘Show respect to the guest of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.’ Then she put the children to bed, extinguished the light and fed the guest. The hosts pretended to eat with him but in fact did not do so. Then the ayah of the Quran was revealed.” The righteous predecessors had much more ability to limit themselves to what was available and there was much more contentment of hearts and their blessings were abundant.

It is narrated that a certain king said to his vizier, “Scholars are better in spiritual state and hearts than Sufis.” But the vizier disagreed and then added, “We will test them in two situations.”

1. He sent a man with several thousand dirhams to a madrasa and told him to say to the scholars, “The king has ordered me to give these dirhams to the most worthy and perfected among you. So who is he?” One of them then said, “It is I!” but another objected, “He lied, I am the most worthy!” Thus each of them began to challenge superiority. Then the messenger said, “I cannot determine who is the most worthy of you,” and did not give this money to anyone. He returned and related what had happened. Then the vizier sent these monies to the lodge of the Sufis, who did exactly the opposite of what the scholars did. Each of them said, “He is better than me! He is worthier than me!”

2. The vizier handed the messenger a sword and told him, “Go to the lodge of the Sufis and tell them, ‘The king has ordered me to cut off the head of your leader. Who is he?’ One of them said, ‘I am the head’, and the other objected, ‘No, I am.’ Thus, each of them declared superiority in order to save his brother and chose to ransom himself for his companion. The messenger said that he could not determine which of them was the leader, returned and related what had happened. Then he was sent with the sword to the scholars who did the opposite of what the Sufis did. The argument of the vizier thus turned out to be weightier than that of the king.

Nowadays, you see that *murids* in cities and villages behave quite differently from those times. The great righteous Abu Yazid al-Bastami ؒ said, “A young man from the people of Balkh overtook me and asked, ‘What is the limit of asceticism (*zuhd*) for you?’ So I said, ‘If we are given something, we are grateful, and if we are denied something, we persevere. He replied, This is what the dogs here in Balkh also do. However, if we are given something, we prefer (to give it to someone else) and if we are denied we are grateful.”

THE VIRTUE OF MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY

It is transmitted from Aisha, the mother of the faithful, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The generous person is close to Almighty Allah, close to people, close to Paradise and is distant from Hell. While the mean person is far from Almighty Allah, far from people, and far from Paradise and close to Hell. Almighty Allah loves a generous ignoramus more than one who is occupied with worship but is mean.” The Prophet ﷺ also said, “The hand which gives is better than the hand which takes.” Bishr ibn al-Harith ؒ said, “Paying attention to a miser hardens one’s heart.”

It is said that once the commander of the faithful, Ali ibn Abu Talib ؓ, was weeping. When asked what made him cry, he replied, “It has already been a week since guests visited me. I fear that Almighty Allah has scorned me.” It is conveyed that the companion Anas ibn Malik ؓ, said, “The *zakat* tax of any house is the presence in it of a separate room for guests.”

BEAUTIFUL WORDS ABOUT MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY

1. One of the scholars said, “I do not like to refuse someone in his need with which he has turned to me. For if he is noble, I allow him to retain his nobility, and if he is of low character, I will protect my honour from him.”

2. It is said, “The guest of a noble man is also noble.”

3. Ibrahim ibn al-Junaid ؒ said, “There are four acts which a noble person should not disdain, even if he is a ruler: to stand up from his seat for his father, to service his guest, to serve a scholar from whom he has acquired knowledge and to ask about what he does not know.”

4. Abdullah ibn Mubarak ؒ said, “Generously restraining oneself from desire for other’s possessions is better than generosity in giving away one’s own possessions.”

STORIES ABOUT SELFLESSNESS, MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY

Stories were narrated from the righteous predecessors that show the ultimate altruism, benevolence and generosity they reached, including:

1. It is said that because of the slander of a man named Ghulam Khalil against the Sufis, the caliph ordered that their heads be cut off. As for Junaid al-Baghdadi ؒ, he was protected by his esteemed position as a jurist, he used to give *fatwas* according to the *madhab* of Abu Thawr.⁵⁶ As for Shahham, Raqqam, al-Nuri and others, they were arrested. When a leather mat was spread out before them, over which they were to be beheaded, al-Nuri stepped forward. The swordsman asked him, “Do you know what you are in a hurry for?” When he answered in the affirmative, the executioner again asked, “What made you hurry?” al-Nuri replied, “I would rather prefer that my companions live at least a little longer.” Perplexed,

⁵⁶ Abu Thawr was a *faqih* who united in his madhhab the fiqh of Imams Abu Hanifa ؒ and ash-Shafi'i ؒ.

the executioner then went and handed the whole matter over to the caliph. And the caliph sent those arrested to the judge (*qadi*) to examine their case. The judge asked Abu Husayn al-Nuri several questions about fiqh, to which he gave reliable answers. Then al-Nuri continued, “And further, Almighty Allah has servants who, when they stand, they stand for the sake of God and when they speak, they speak for the sake of Him” and uttered words that caused the judge to weep. The judge then told the caliph, “If these people are indeed heretics, then there is probably not a single faithful Muslim on the face of the earth.”

2. It is said that Ali ibn Fudayl ؑ used to buy all his goods from the merchants in his locality. He was told, “If you went to the main market, you could have bought more cheaply.” In response, he said, “These people came to us, hoping to benefit from us.”

3. Abul Hasan al-Bushanji ؑ, while in the latrine, called his pupil and said to him, “Take this shirt from me and give it to so-and-so.” When they asked him, “Couldn’t you have waited until you left the latrine?” He answered, “I was not sure that my *nafs* would not later change this decision.”

4. Qays ibn Sa’d ibn `Ubadah ؑ was asked, “Have you seen anyone more generous than yourself?” He replied, “Yes. In the desert we once stopped at (the dwelling of) a certain woman. Then her husband arrived. She told him that guests had come. The husband brought a camel and slaughtered it and said that it was for us. The next day, he brought another camel, slaughtered it and told us ‘This is for you.’ We objected, ‘But we have only eaten some of the meat of the camel you slaughtered for us yesterday.’ He then said, ‘I do not treat my guests with yesterday’s food.’ We stayed with him for two or three more days, for it was raining, and every day he repeated the same thing. When we were ready to leave, we left a hundred dinars at his house and said to his wife, ‘Apologise to him for us,’ and left his house. At the height of the midday sun, we heard the cry of a man shouting after us, ‘Stop, O ignoble horsemen! You want to pay for my hospitality?’ Then he caught up with us and insisted, ‘You absolutely must take this money back!’”

5. They say that Abdullah ibn Ja`far ؓ, when travelling to his farm in the country, stopped to rest near a grove of date palms belonging to certain people. A black servant was working in the grove. They brought him food and at that time a dog jumped the fence and approached the servant. He threw it a round of bread which it ate up. Then he threw it a second and a third round. The dog ate these up too. Abdullah ibn Ja`far ؓ looked at the man and asked, "O servant, how much food you receive every day?" He replied, "Just what you have seen (that is, three loaves of bread)." Abdullah ؓ asked, "And why did you favour this dog over yourself?" And the servant replied, "There are no dogs living hereabouts. This dog has come, hungry, from far away and I did not want to deny it." Abdullah ؓ asked, "How will you manage today?" He replied, "Today I will go hungry." Then Abdullah ibn Ja`far ؓ said, "And people reproach me for my over generosity. However, this man is more generous than me." Abdullah ibn Ja`far ؓ bought the servant, this garden and everything therein and then freed this servant and gave him the garden.

6. Mutarrif ibn Shikhhir ؓ said, "Whenever one of you wants me to fulfill any of your needs, may he pass a note on to me. Truly, I do not like to see the humiliation of need on anyone's face."

7. It is said that someone turned to Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib ؓ for some charity. Hasan gave him fifty thousand dirhams and five hundred dinars and told him to fetch a porter to carry this money. And when he arrived with the porter, Hasan ؓ gave him his caftan and added, "The porter's wages are also on me."

8. When Imam ash-Shafi`i ؓ was near death, he said, "Tell such-and-such a person to wash my body." However, the man happened to be away at that time. When he returned from the journey the words of the imam were conveyed to him. He asked that the ledger of Imam ash-Shafi`i be brought. In it was written the imam's debt in the amount of seventy thousand dirhams. The man paid off Imam ash-Shafi`i's debt and said, "This is my washing of him."

9. The righteous as-Sari as-Saqati ؓ left his house on a festival day and met a person of high position. Al-Sari ؓ greeted him

with cursorily. He was told, “This is a very important person.” He responded, “Yes, I recognized him but it is transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ that, ‘when two Muslims meet, a hundred mercies are divided between them: ninety of them are intended for the one who is more affable.’ And I wanted him to receive the most.”

10. One of the righteous said, “One very cold day, I went to Bishr ibn al-Harith ؓ and found him almost disrobed, trembling from the cold. I said to him, “O Abu Nasr ؓ, on such days people dress more warmly but you, on the contrary, are unclothed.” He replied, “I have remembered the poor and in what a difficult situation they were in. I do not have anything to comfort them with. Therefore, I wanted to join in enduring the cold with them.”

CHAPTER 12

SPIRITUAL CHIVALRY AND MANLINESS THE ESSENCE OF MAGNANIMITY AND COURAGE

Know that even if expressions differ in explaining the reality of both *futuwwa* (magnanimity) and *murūʿa* (manliness); the meaning around which they revolve is the same, which is: sincerity of the tongue, tolerance of the mistakes of brothers, the giving of kindness to the people and not harming the neighbors.

Abu al-Hasan al-Bushanji ؓ was asked about chivalry, to which he replied, “It is the renunciation of using that which is not permitted, as you have angels with you who record all your deeds (i.e. continually).”

Al-Antaki ؓ said, “Manliness is performing acts of obedience, avoiding prohibitions, and rejecting the enjoyment of bodily passions.”

One of the righteous said, “The basis of magnanimity is the constant striving of a servant to fulfill the needs of other people.”

Junaid ؓ was asked about magnanimity and said, “It is that you do not repulse the poor and do not oppose the wealthy. And truthfulness is the friend of magnanimity and freedom.”

COURAGE AND MANLINESS – FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE TARIQAH

O Muslims, the followers of *tariqah* were in agreement that humaneness, courage and chivalry are necessary requirements on the path to knowledge of Almighty Allah. I prefer, like a mountain tur, to reject what is in people's hands and turn away. I do not want to be like a goat, accepting largesse from people in the form of worldly goods, which for Almighty Allah do not possess the weight of a mosquito's wing, even if all worldly riches were to be united together.

When Imam al-Khawwas ؒ was asked what is the reason that prevents *murids* from accepting kindness from people? He replied, "Because of the fear of indebtedness, arising out of their magnanimity and good nature which induces them to compensate people for their kindness, fulfillment of their due rights and their attention to them."

The Prophet ﷺ alerted his companions to the importance of observing manliness and cautioned them against committing that which could violate or defile it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Refrain from sitting on the roads. But if you do, then accord the road its due." They asked, "And what is due to the road, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Lowering the gaze, refraining from harm, responding to greetings, enjoining good and forbidding evil."

When Almighty Allah praised the people of the Cave (Ashab al-Kahf), He praised them for being young and from their youth their courage that drew them to monotheism, which is the source of perfection. The Almighty said (meaning), "We narrate to you their story with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance." (Sura al-Kahf, ayah 13)

The Men of the Cave were called '(chivalrous) young men', because they believed in their Lord at first behest; they believed without delay when the reasons for the connection with Almighty came to them. And it is said that they were young because they rose towards God and did not settle until they reached God. And it is said that the origin of courage is faith and so God named the companions of the cave young men, and He said (meaning), "They were young men who believed in their Lord." (Sura al-Kahf, ayah 13)

BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT CHIVALRY AND MANLINESS

The righteous predecessors spoke luminous words about spiritual chivalry and manliness:

1. One of the righteous said, “Our manliness is to give to those who deprive us, to forgive those who have wronged us, to connect with those who have cut us off and to do good to those who offend us.”

2. Imam al-Junaid ؒ said, “Manliness resides in Sham (Syria), eloquence in Iraq and truthfulness in Khorasan.”

3. Fudayl ؒ noted, “Manliness means forgetting the faults of your brothers.”

4. Abu Bakr al-Warraq ؒ said, “A chivalrous person is one who has no opponent whatsoever.”

5. Muhammad ibn Ali at-Tirmidhi ؒ said, “Manliness means that you are your own enemy before Allah.”⁵⁷

6. They say, “A chivalrous person cannot be an adversary to anyone (but himself).”

7. It is also said that a chivalrous person is one who has broken idols, for Almighty Allah said: “We heard a (chivalrous) young man named Ibrahim making mention of them (the idols of his people).” (Sura al-Anbiya, ayah 60) The idol of every person is his *nafs*, therefore he who goes against his own passions is a truly courageous person.

8. They say, “Chivalry means that you act justly, while not demanding justice for your own self.”

9. `Amr ibn `Uthman al-Makki ؒ said, “Manliness means having good moral character.”

10. An-Nasrabadhi ؒ noted, “Manliness is part of chivalry. It means turning away from both worlds in disdain (turning entirely to Allah only).”

57 I.e., you are always the first to acknowledge your failings before God.

11. Muhammad ibn Ali at-Tirmidhi ؒ said, “Manliness is when you provide the same hospitality to those in your household as to those who come to visit as guests.”

12. When one of the righteous was asked about manliness, he replied, “It is abandoning what you are longing for, for the sake of what you dread.”

13. Someone asked a Sufi about manliness. He replied, “It means that you do not care whether the guest whom you entertain at your table is a saint or an infidel.”

14. Junaid ؒ said, “Manliness is refraining from committing harm, fulfilling only that which is good and refusing to complain.”

15. Sahl ibn Abdullah ؒ noted, “Manliness means adhering to the custom of the Prophet ﷺ.”

16. It was also said, “Manliness is being faithful and observing the limits set by God.”

17. “Manliness is a virtue that you perform without attributing it to yourself.”

18. “Manliness is not hiding from those who seek your assistance.”

19. “Manliness is showing your gratitude for God’s bounty and hiding hardship (inflicted upon you by God).”

20. “Manliness is when you invite ten guests (for a meal) and do not care whether eleven or nine come instead.”

21. “It is not manliness to take advantage of friendship.”

22. “Manliness is to accord preference to others before oneself, after having given them preference in all that is connected with this and the eternal worlds.”

23. “Manliness is to do good to everyone, whether they are worthy or not.”

24. “Manliness is always being occupied with fulfilling the needs of other people, for the Prophet ﷺ said, “Almighty Allah attends constantly to the needs of His servant as long as His servant attends to the needs of his fellow Muslims.”

25. “Manliness is the forgiveness of others’ mistakes and the concealing of their shortcomings.”

26. “Manliness is when you do not consider yourself superior to others.”

27. One of the pious said, “It is not noble to draw on a guest to work.”

BEAUTIFUL STORIES ABOUT MANLINESS AND SPIRITUAL CHIVALRY

Great instructive stories have come down to us from the righteous. We give some of them below:

1. They say that the following incident was the reason why the righteous Hatim⁵⁸ ؓ was nicknamed “al-Asam” (the deaf). A certain woman came to him for a legal opinion. As she was asking Hatam ؓ a question, accidentally wind loudly escaped her and she was most embarrassed. But then Hatam ؓ told her, “Speak louder!” so as to indicate that he was hard of hearing. The woman was delighted and thought, “So he heard nothing.” And after this, he became known as “al-Asam”.

2. Dhul-Nun al-Misri ؓ related, “When they brought me before the caliph on charges of heresy, I saw a water-carrier there. He was wearing a turban and an Egyptian-style shawl and in his hands was a fine earthenware pitcher. I asked, “Does this man serve water to the ruler?” They answered, “No, he serves water to the common folk.” Then I took a pitcher from him, drank some water and said to my companion, “Give him a dinar.” However, the water-carrier refused to take the money, saying, “You are a prisoner, it would not be chivalrous to take anything from you.”

58 Abu `Abd al-Rahman Hatim b. `Unwan (or Hatim b. Yusuf or Hatim b. `Urwan b. Yusuf al-Ašamm (the deaf; d. 237/851–2), a disciple of Shaqīq al-Balkhī, was a native of Balkh, he is considered one of the earliest spiritual masters of Khurāsān.

3. Dhul-Nun al-Misri ة also said, “There was a chivalrous young man named Ahmad ibn Sahl among the merchants. I bought a piece of white material from him and he took only what it cost him. I asked him, “Won’t you take more for it?” He replied, “I only took the price of the fabric, so as not to burden you with feelings of indebtedness, had I not charged you at all.”

4. It is said that a man who had made claims of chivalry travelled from Nishapur to Nisa,⁵⁹ where someone invited him for a meal along with a group of (chivalrous) young men. When they had finished their feast, a maid came to pour water for them to wash their hands. The man from Nishapur retracted his hands, saying, “It is not fitting for a chivalrous man to have a woman pour water on his hands!”

5. It is related that a certain man was spending a night in Medina after the pilgrimage. He dreamed that his satchel was stolen. Coming out of his room he saw Ja`far al-Sadiq ة and accosted him, “Have you taken my satchel?” “What was in it?” asked Ja`far. “One thousand dinars,” answered the pilgrim. Ja`far brought him to his house and weighed out one thousand dinars for him. When the pilgrim returned to where he was staying, he discovered his satchel there. So the man went back to Ja`far to apologize and to return his money. However, the latter refused to accept it, saying: “I never take back something I have given away.”

6. Imam ash-Sha`rani ة said, “Know that the chivalry of the beloved servants (*awliya*) of Almighty Allah manifests itself in that, if they are allowed to intercede for anyone, they will first do so for those who caused them harm in this world or accused them of unbelief or heresy or the commission of ostentatious acts and other vices. They do this so as to release a person who has harmed them of pangs of conscience, when he sees their degree before the Almighty – of which he knew not in this world and which the beloved of Allah have gained in eternal life.⁶⁰ Having received intercession on the Day of Judgment, the souls of those who reproached the righteous will be calmed and the fear of the beloved of Allah due to the harm caused them will leave them.”

59 Nisa is an ancient city now located in the Republic of Turkmenistan.

60 i.e. closeness to the Creator and the attention of the Creator to their appeals.

He also noted, “The righteous, Allah’s beloved, did not intercede for those who were friendly with them and believed in them in this world. This is because whoever has done good will be tranquil about what he has already committed. For his goodness is sufficient for him and it is this which will intercede for him before Almighty Allah.”

Know that it is a condition of chivalry to conceal the shortcomings of one’s friends, especially those that elicit the glee of their enemies.

The righteous Abu `Ali al-Daqqaq ؓ said, “No one has achieved perfection in chivalry, except the Messenger of God ﷺ for on the Day of Judgement all the prophets will be saying, ‘Me, Me’, except the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who will be saying, ‘My community, my community!’ ”

Know that freedom (liberty) is more honourable than truthfulness and that spiritual chivalry is more precious than both. Manliness is a part of chivalry. The difference between a chivalrous person and an ascetic (*zahid*) lies in the *zahid* preferring others when there is sufficiency and the chivalrous when he himself is in need. As the Almighty (meaning) said, “They gave to them in preference over themselves even though poverty be their portion.” (Sura al-Hashr, ayah 9)

CHAPTER 13

FREEDOM

Know that true freedom (personal independence) means that the servant is free of bondage to creatures and he is not subject to the authority of created things. The sign of its soundness is that one no longer prefers one thing over another in his heart to the extent that all worldly contingencies are equal to him.

One can also say that freedom is leaving the bliss of the world and choosing to worship the Lord.

Also know that the essence of freedom lies in the perfection of your servitude (*`ubudiyah*) to Almighty Allah. When Junaid ؒ was asked about (the case of) a man whose worldly goods were equivalent to the moisture on a date stone, he replied, “A *mukatab*⁶¹ remains a servant, while he owes even a dirham.” Husayn ibn Mansur ؒ said, “Whoever desires freedom, let him be constant in servitude. Truly, the state of freedom is found very rarely.”

Know that the greatest kind of freedom lies in serving the poor. Yahya ibn Mu`adh ؒ said, “The sons of this worldly *dunya* are served by male and female servants, whereas the sons of the Hereafter are served by the righteous and the free.” Almighty Allah sent down a revelation to the prophet Dawud ؑ, “If you encounter one who seeks Me, be his servant.” The Prophet ﷺ also said, “The master of a people is their servant.”

BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT FREEDOM

Many valuable words have been said about freedom, including the following:

1. One of the righteous said, “I have relinquished this world, and the earth’s rocks and its gold have become equal to me.”
2. The righteous ad-Daqqaq ؒ said, “Whoever is free from the worldly in this life, will be free from it (i.e. from sin) in eternal life.
3. Ibrahim ibn Adham ؒ noted, “The righteous free person removes himself from the world before he is taken from it.”
4. He also advised, “Keep the company of none but one who is noble and free: he will listen, but will not speak (to others).”

⁶¹ A servant released on condition that a certain sum be paid.

CHAPTER 14

LOVE

Know that the essence of love is sympathy, an inclination in a person's nature towards something or someone because it (the object of love) brings pleasure to the one who is in love. True love of a servant for the Lord appears only after his heart is cleansed of all spiritual impurity (murkiness), for the love of the Almighty is of the quality of all-consuming fire. And the sign of such love is the doing away of passions and attachments to both worlds. And a sign of Allah's love for His servant is the love of the servant for Allah. Allah's love for a servant is His will (*iradah*) to endow him with abundant favours and good deeds by bringing him closer to Him and bestowing on him high spiritual states and degrees. God's will is an attribute that takes on different names according to the different acts to which it is connected. If it is connected to universally bestowed blessings, it is called 'mercy' (*rahmah*) and if it is connected with particularly bestowed blessings, it is called 'love' (*mahabbah*).

Know that those in love with Allah are divided into three categories: ordinary people, the chosen and the especially chosen.⁶² Everyone will love whoever loves Almighty Allah greatly. The whole Muslim community is of unanimous accord that love of Allah and of the Prophet ﷺ is an individual duty of each and every believer.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When Allah loves one of His servants, He says, "O Jibril, I love such and such a person, therefore love him too!" Then all the inhabitants of heaven will love him and all the inhabitants of the earth will accept him." The Prophet ﷺ also conveyed the words of the Almighty, "If I look in the heart of a servant and do not find in it love for the worldly, I fill his heart with My love." The Prophet ﷺ also said, "A sign of love for Allah is love for His remembrance."

⁶² i.e., ordinary Muslims, murids and sheikh-mentors.

STATEMENTS ABOUT LOVE

1. The love of a servant for Allah is in his glorification of Him, trying to gain His contentment, having little patience in being separated from Him, finding no comfort in anything other than Him and (experiencing intimacy in his heart by making) continual remembrance of Him.”

2. It is said that to love Allah means to hasten to fulfill the obligatory and additional forms of worship, as well as to strictly distance oneself from disobedience. This is affirmed by the words transmitted by the Prophet ﷺ from Almighty Allah, “A servant best draws near to Me by performing the obligations (*fard*) I have enjoined on him. He continues to draw near to Me by means of supererogatory (*Sunna*) acts of worship until I love him. For him whom I love, I become his ear, his eye, his hand, and his support.”

3. They also say, “Love is a state of a servant that does not decrease with hardships and does not increase with kindness.”

4. “Love is a fire in the heart that consumes everything except the Beloved’s wishes.”

5. In interpreting the words of Allah (meaning), “Worship Allah and do not attribute partners to Him,” the theological scholar Mujahid رحمه commented that they mean, “Do not love anyone but Allah.”

6. One of those who knew Allah (*‘arifun*) related the following from the Almighty, “O My servant, I have created all for your sake - and you I have created for Myself. But you have occupied yourself with what was created for you and have betrayed Me to oblivion. When blessings distract you from the One who bestowed them on you, you do not express due gratitude for them. This is why every blessing that distracts you from Me is a curse and every boon that distracts from Me is a tribulation.”

In short, there is danger in claiming to love Allah. Therefore, Fudayl رحمه explained, “If you are asked, ‘Do you love Almighty Allah?’ remain silent. This is because, should you answer negatively, you

lapse into unbelief. And should you answer in the affirmative, you do not possess the characteristics of those who love Allah. Therefore, fear the wrath of Allah.” One of the theological scholars remarked, “There is no bliss in Paradise higher than the bliss of the people who know and love Almighty Allah and there is no torment in Hell that is more severe than the torment of the one who claims knowledge and love for Allah and none of that is possessed.”

CHAPTER 15

SINCERITY

THE ESSENCE OF SINCERITY

Know that sincerity (*ikhlas*) is purifying one’s actions of any awareness of fellow creatures. Sincerity is the opposite of showing off. If a person has not committed a deed for show, this means that he was sincere. The performance of ostentatious deeds (*riya’*) is a person’s striving to occupy a place in the people’s hearts through demonstrating (or disclosing) his good deeds and qualities. For example, this is when someone wants people to take notice of his worship and other good deeds. According to an authentic tradition Almighty Allah said, “Sincerity is a secret taken from My secret, which I have placed as a trust in the hearts of servants I love.”

Know that sincerity in relation to Allah is demonstrated in deeds, words and property. And each degree has its own preconditions for the followers of the oneness of God (monotheism). These are: that we do not attribute neither any benefit and harm nor any solution and fixing to any of creation and not to utter such words and expressions such as “I”, “with us”, “our” and “according to us” - except as a metaphor or out of forgetfulness. For to correlate whatever may occur with people’s will is considered a hidden attribution of a partner to the Almighty (*shirk*). Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Worship Allah and do not attribute any partner to Him.” (Sura an-Nisa, ayah 63) The word “any” is here stressed to indicate no exception.

A *murid* asked for the forgiveness of sins from his Lord, saying, “O my Lord, forgive me! Truly, You have promised forgiveness to everyone who did not attribute any partner to You and You know that I never attributed to You a partner.” Then he heard a secret voice asking, “Even on the day they brought milk?” The *murid* then felt ashamed, for he remembered that one day he was brought milk to drink and he said, “I am afraid that the milk will harm me.” Allah considered these words as *shirk*, for the *murid* linked harm and milk. Reflect on this.

REMEDY AGAINST OSTENTATION

Know that someone who wants to be completely rid of this quality (i.e. performing acts for show) needs a perfect spiritual guide (*sheikh kamil*) whose choice is exhausted in his choice. This is necessary so that the spiritual mentor may lead him along the unseen path and bring him to the presence of Almighty Allah. This is because a person who has not embarked on this path (i.e. the path of the *tariqah*) does not rise in degree in his worship but rather is just marking time with his *nafs* and other creatures. But if he entered the path of *tariqah* and reached the state of sincerity then he will realise that only Almighty Allah is the true Creator of all a person’s deeds. And then there will be no other choice for him but to admit that only figuratively and metaphorically are the deeds he performs associated with his own self and his will. And then he will begin to perceive the parts of his body as instruments that someone else controls and makes move. He will realise that Almighty Allah moves the parts of his body, nourishing them with strength and support. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “I fear for nothing for my community, except for hidden polytheism – and this is the performing of deeds for show.”

Treatment for ostentation is a difficult matter, for this quality is meshed with the human heart and rooted within it. The cause of the difficulty of treatment is that a person, as he has grown up and matured among people, has seen them manifesting it among themselves by adorning each other and praising each other.

From Imam ash-Sha`rani rahimahullah they said, “Everyone who is engaged in worship has made something other than Allah as his goal which was not authorized by the Almighty. People can be divided into several categories in this regard:

1. Those who, through their knowledge, deeds and other good acts, strive to occupy a certain place in people’s hearts, to gain fame and reputation and to have spread in prestige.

2. Those who, through their knowledge and deeds, strive to raise their degree and yearn to be endowed with the ability to perform miracles (*karamat*), to discharge the affairs of the world, to walk on water, to fly through the air and to unveil the hidden.

3. Those who do not pursue any worldly goals through their knowledge and deeds, but strive only to gain entry to Paradise, beautiful paradisiacal virgins and other rewards of eternal life.

4. Those who, through their knowledge and deeds, strive to be saved from the fire of Hell and the fear of accounting and punishment on the Day of Judgment. And also to be saved from torment and affliction that Almighty Allah has prepared for people in the next world.

5. Those who, through their knowledge and deeds, strive to draw closer to Almighty Allah and to attain His satisfaction and love for Him.

6. However, there are those who have no other intention in their knowledge and deeds except to worship Allah as He is truly deserving of worship. Such a person does not rely on his own power and strength but performs all his deeds sincerely in the fear of Almighty Allah. He does not see that he has fulfilled even one iota of the duties that he was entrusted with in the manner in which he was commanded. Only after this, does a *murid* begin to approach the level of sincerity of the chosen people, each atom of which is equated with a thousand years of worship of those people of the previous five categories. In the book “Ibriz” it is noted, “All that you have done for the sake of rewards and blessings are acts for other than Almighty Allah.”

Absolutely devoid of benefits are the deeds of people performed not for Almighty Allah's sake but for their own selfish goals and interests. Such deeds only distance one from Almighty Allah for they contradict the essence of His ordinances. The Almighty did not say, "Perform deeds for the sake of your own goals and for doing so I will bestow great rewards on you." On the contrary, Almighty Allah said (meaning), "Worship Me with sincerity and I will endow you with blessed recompense." Therefore, our intentions regarding all of our deeds should be only for the sake of Almighty Allah, for His exaltation and His greatness.

How despicable and ignorant a servant is, if he believes that his deeds earn benefits and rewards, although he knows that the deeds committed by him do not bring him benefits even as minute as a single hair! We ourselves and our deeds were created for Almighty Allah, therefore how can we hope to gain benefits for these deeds created for Him and not merely relying on His grace and mercy instead? However, complacency in relation to Allah blinds insights. May Allah save us from this!

Know that there is a medicine that if a servant uses it, it will rid him of ostentation (*riya'*) and self-admiration (*'ujb*), and it is to increase the remembrance of God Almighty under the instruction (*talqin*) of an authorized sheikh whose permission (*ijazah*) is valid, until true monotheism (*tawhid*) is manifested in his heart and he sees his actions as a whole are the creation of God alone, in which a servant has nothing but attribution.

Our Sheikh `Abdurrahman al-`Asawi ؒ said, "A person will not be freed from committing deeds for show until he reaches a level in which he sees that there is no mover but God." This happens when a *murid* reaches perfection. Allah knows best!

SUBTLETIES OF HYPOCRISY

Among the subtleties of hypocrisy is worship with the intention of getting closer to the presence of God Almighty, for that is like working for a wage. This illness is one of the hidden faults and its

possessor may ascend to nearness to the presence of God Almighty, whereupon it is said to him, “Return, because you are not one of its people. Its people are those who worship God in compliance with His command and in fulfillment of the duty of His right, the Almighty.”

The nuances of hypocrisy also include the abandoning of work because of people. The righteous Fudayl ؓ stated, “Abandoning good works for the sake of men is hypocrisy (*riya*’), and to perform them for the sake of men is polytheism (*shirk*). Through sincerity (*ikhlas*) God absolves you from both.”

Performing deeds for show also includes ceasing to engage in the jocularity permitted by the Lord when someone comes with whom you feel uneasy. Fudayl ؓ said, “If they told me, ‘Truly, the ruler of the faithful is now coming to you’ and I adjusted my beard, I would be afraid that my name would be written down among the hypocrites.” Such aspects of performing deeds for show include bowing one’s head and displaying excessive reverence when an important person enters.

Know, O Muslims, that the possessor of sincerity does not care about people’s words, does not feel offended in his heart with slander and does not admire nor rejoice in praise. So be at heart with Allah and exert every effort to avoid negligence and be better for creation, expand in living for your family and for yourself and seek the lawful where it is found.

Master Ibrahim al-Matbuli ؓ said, “When Almighty Allah created people, He asked them, “Who are you?” They replied, “Your servants who love You.” The Almighty said, “Think over what you are saying, because those who love Me cannot be taken from Me by anything and cannot be deterred even by swords and calamities.” The people said, “Test us as You will.” Then the Almighty created for them the blessings of worldly life. Nine-tenths of them went after the worldly and only one-tenth remained. Allah addressed the latter, “Who are you?” They answered, “Your servants who love You.” The Almighty said, “Think over what you are saying, because you who love Me cannot be taken from Me by anything and cannot be deterred even by swords and calamities. You, indeed, have seen your companions

and how they chased after the things of the world.” They said, “Test us as You will.” Then Allah created Paradise for them and adorned it for their eyes. And nine-tenths of those remaining went to Paradise. Then Allah asked the rest, “Who are you?” They replied, “Those who love You.” The Almighty said, “Think over what you say, after all you saw your companions.” They said, “Test us as You will.” Then the Lord tested them with one among a gamut of afflictions. They showed fortitude and withstood. And this Allah also endowed them with. Then the Creator said to them, “You are My true servants, you neither pursued the blessings of worldly life nor Paradise nor fled from adversity. Testify, O My angels, that I am pleased with these who are close to Me.”

BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT SINCERITY

1. Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due?” (Sura al-Zumar, ayah 3) That is secure from being tainted by associating others in His worship.

2. The Prophet ﷺ said, There are three things that prevent the heart of the Muslim from being unfaithful: sincerity towards God in his actions, counseling those in power, and always holding on to the community of Muslims.”

3. Hasan ؓ was asked about sincerity and said, “I posed Hudhayfa ؓ a question about sincerity and he answered that he had asked the Prophet ﷺ about it. The Prophet ﷺ replied that he had asked the angel Jibrail about it. Jibrail answered that he had posed this question to the Greatest Lord and He replied, “Sincerity is a secret taken from My secret. I have placed it as a trust in the hearts of servants I love.”

4. It is said, “When they perceive sincerity in their sincerity, their sincerity is in need of sincerity.

5. Junaid ؓ noted, “Sincerity is a secret between God and a servant. Even the recording angel knows nothing about it to write it down. The devil does not know of it to corrupt it, nor is passion aware of it that it might influence it.”

6. The righteous Sahl ؓ was asked, “What is the hardest thing for the *nafs*?” He replied, “It is sincerity - for it has no share in it.”

7. One of the theological scholars noted, “Many are the people of “*la ilaha illa'llah*” (that is, Muslims), yet few of them are sincere.”

8. It was also said that, “Anyone who has remained sincere for forty days will experience wisdom flowing from the springs of his heart to his tongue.”

9. One of the pious observed, “The rarest thing on earth is sincerity. How many times have I struggled to rid my heart of hypocrisy, only to have it reappear in another guise.”

CHAPTER 16

HELP AND RESPECT FOR PEOPLE

Know that The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever walks to fulfill the needs of his brother, God will make his feet firm on the path of Sirat.” The Prophet ﷺ noted further, “Almighty Allah helps a servant as long as the servant helps his brother.” The Creator endowed man with authority and elevated him above other creatures so that he would establish a just order on earth. `Ali al-Khawwas ؓ stated, “(When a time comes to deprive servants of blessings bestowed upon them), Allah sends angels down to earth to test people. Angels come to the doorstep of someone known amongst people for his generosity and hospitality and start to beg insistently. Once he responds to their entreaties, they ask again and again until he gets angry and reveals the bad qualities of his character. When he does this, the angels cry out to Allah and He deprives him of His blessing.”

This is supported by the following sayings of the Prophet ﷺ, “Almighty Allah has blessings that He will give to His servants until they tire of helping others. When they do so, Allah transfers these blessings to other servants” and “O Aisha, always show respect for the blessings of Allah bestowed upon you, for if they desert the inhabitants of a house, they rarely return.”

THE VIRTUE OF FULFILLING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

Know, O Muslims, that you exalt Almighty Allah by showing respect to the faithful. Thanks to this respect, a believer attains the degree of the true essence of fear of God (*taqwa*). The righteous Ma`ruf al-Karkhi ؒ related that a friend of Dawud al-Ta'i ؒ told him, "Beware of forsaking good deeds, for they bring you closer to the satisfaction of your Lord." And when he asked what these deeds are, he heard in response, "Constant submission to the Lord, service to Muslims and their edification. The most disgraced person is a pauper who is humiliated by someone who is well-to-do and concurs with this injustice. And the most noble is a rich person who humbles himself before the poor and holds them in respect."

Our righteous predecessors hastened to aid brothers in faith and to alleviate the difficulties of the poor. Imam ash-Sha`rani ؒ said, "I asked my master `Ali al-Khawwas ؒ about the reason for the disintegration of hearts of some people of our time and he replied, 'The reason for this is their abandonment of that which led them to friendship and love: benevolence, gifts, charitable donations and other bounties.'" A hadith says, "Hearts are made to love those who are kind to them."

`Ali al- Khawwas ؒ also said that his father told him, "I do not remember having bought muslin, a length of cloth, a shirt, shoes, soap, wheat, barley, sugar, honey, a sacrificial animal, sweets, a silk scarf for my wife, slippers, a loincloth or anything else that a living person needs. All this and more has been given to us as gifts by friends." It is evident from this that when people did not do good to each other, their hearts were divided and as a result affliction befell them, for it never descends on a people whose hearts are united in goodness and love. Rather, the affliction stops between heaven and earth for a hundred years until it finds dissension between people and separation and then it descends.

Beware, O Muslims, of censuring *murids* even in thought. If they say to you, "Be not with us, if you will not do us good and donate your property," know that they do this in order to test you and not because of love for things of the world. They want to check

that you love them more than your property. Apropos of this, many merchants and wealthy people say to their mentors, “We swear by Allah that you are dearer to us than all of our property and our families!” And when they are asked for just one dinar, it becomes as though a burden on them so they are exposed. If they ponder over a dinar for their sheikh as being heavy on them, how about their donating to individual people?

Sayid Youssef al-Ajmi used to tell his servants when someone knocked on his door, “Look through the door crack, if you find something with him for the poor, then open it for him, otherwise it is a worthless visit.” He was asked once, “What do you mean by that and are you not of those who love the world?” He said, “The dearest for the *murid* is their time and the dearest for the children of this world is their material possessions. If they gave us their dearest, we would give them our dearest. Otherwise, we are a group and they are a group that has no bond with us except for the exchange of greetings and nothing else.

Know, O Muslims, that helping to conclude a marriage (*nikah*) to someone in straitened circumstances is more valued than freeing slaves and participating in the *ghazawat* (*jihad*). Be afraid to leave this world if, possessing a thousand dinars or more, you did not donate them to build a well, to help someone without enough money to marry, for clothes for an orphan, for repayment of a debt of someone in a difficult position or to bring joy to your neighbors.

Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمته الله said, “Vows were taken from us that we would help everyone who is worried about the calamities that befall them. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Muslims are like a single body: if one of the organs complains (out of pain), the entire body responds with lack of sleep and temperature.” A vow was also taken from us that when we were to leave our home for a period of twenty or more minutes, we would say, “O my Allah, if one of the brothers in faith or someone else is intending to visit us in need or to greet us during our absence, then delay his exit until we get back. And if he is already on his way, keep us where we are until he arrives!”

CHAPTER 17

SCRUPULOUSNESS (WARA`) THE ESSENCE OF SCRUPULOUSNESS

Know that scrupulousness in observing the prescriptions of religion lies in the rejection of whatever is dubious (*shubha*).

The question of what constitutes the doubtful in religion lies in either the permissibility or the prohibition of that about which there is no clarity and of which the true essence is not fully understood.

The significance of scrupulousness in religion is explained in the words of the spiritual mentor Abu al-Hasan ؑ, “Protect your heart from desires for the worldly, love for women and indulgence of passions. Be content with all what God Almighty has apportioned to you. If you have found this in a way with which the Almighty will be pleased, then express gratitude to Him. But if you received it in a way that could cause the Creator’s anger, then be patient about it.” Love for Allah is an axis around which all good deeds revolve. The fortifications of all of this are four: true scrupulousness, good intention, sincerity in deeds and companionship with knowledge. But these four features will not be perfected in you, if you do not maintain a connection with a righteous brother in faith or a sheikh who guides you.

Beware, and beware again, of accepting anything worldly from people other than what is explicitly permitted by the Shari`a. Beware, and beware again, of reaching out your hand to the worldly and that which *qadi* (judges) are accustomed to accept in an unlawful way. Satan has adorned them as impurity disguised as gold and poison coated with sugar. Eating from deadly poison with the taste of delusional sugar and choosing evil impurity in the hope of imaginary gold, are the acts of an absolutely ignorant and outright fool.

Truly, the belongings of this world are negligible. Most of the worldly disappears and only a meager part remains; and this is tainted. Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Eternal life is better and it is enduring.” (Sura al-A`la, ayah 17) Its term is eternal and infinite.

A sheikh said to a student who had taken some money from the people, “O my son, the followers of Sufism unanimously agreed that manliness, courage and chivalry are necessary requirements if you are on the path of Almighty Allah. However, you preferred humiliation, cowardice and faint-heartedness. You did not even realise the value of chivalry. You have committed deeds that led to ignominy and embarrassment. Why were you not ashamed to take some coins from such a person? Even though you knew that, although the noble Sharia does not welcome the rejection of gifts, I do not accept them, except for minor things such as cakes and the like which people are ashamed to return! Even then, I reciprocate, in some small way that I can manage. You completely tore away the veil of modesty and you were not even ashamed of the most despicable people!”

O my son, I prefer to be like a mountain tur, rejecting what people may have in their hands and turning away from it. I do not want to be like a goat, accepting people’s benevolence in the form of worldly possessions, which for Almighty Allah do not have the weight of a mosquito’s wing, even if all worldly riches were to be combined.”

Ibrahim ibn Adham ؑ said, “Obtain your livelihood according to the principles permitted by the Shari`a. Then there will be no need for you to observe additional fasts during the day and to stay awake at night in worship.”

SCRUPULOUSNESS DOES NOT NEGATE THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD’S BLESSINGS

True scrupulousness neither contradicts nor conflicts with enjoying the favours of God Almighty, for scrupulousness is exhibited in what is forbidden and what is abominable. Scholars said, “It is the duty of a *murid* to be scrupulous about what is forbidden and suspicious and the mainstay of all this is in being scrupulous about one’s morsel of food. If the consumer of the lawful wanted to disobey, he would not be able to do so, and if the consumer of the unlawful wanted to obey, he too would not be able to do so.”

It should be noted that leaving what is permitted is not related to scrupulousness, as is transmitted in the hadith: “When a man vowed to fast while standing in the sun without shade, the Messenger of God ﷺ commanded him to sit in the shade and to complete his fast.” The Prophet ﷺ commanded him to complete what came from obedience to God and to abandon what is not considered obedience. O, if only the observer of scrupulousness, rejecting that which is permitted, were to remain in purity and safeguard it! Alas, on the contrary, he becomes a sinner, because he does not apply to himself that which is prescribed by the Shari`a. He believed in outweighing what is well-arranged in the Shari`a and this is clearly misguided.

The Prophet ﷺ loved sweetmeats with honey and ate meat, especially the foreshank, and he soaked raisins and dates in a drink and perfumed himself with musk.

BEAUTIFUL WORDS ABOUT SCRUPULOUSNESS

1. One of the scholars noted, “Scrupulousness (*wara`*) is giving up dubious things.”

2. It was also said, “Scrupulousness in the external sense is that there be no outward movement except for God Almighty and scrupulousness in the internal sense is that nothing other than Almighty Allah enters your heart.”

3. Sufyan al-Thawri رحمه الله remarked, “I have never seen anything easier than scrupulousness: whatever your *nafs* devises, abandon it.”

4. It was advised, “Guard your tongue from praise just as you guard it from censure.”

5. When a certain theologian was asked, “What is the foundation of religion?” he answered, “Scrupulousness.” And when they asked him, “What is the ruin of religion?” he answered, “Greed.”

6. They also related, “Almighty Allah sent down a revelation to the prophet Musa عليه السلام, “The ones nearest to Me have reached their position only through scrupulousness and abstention.”

7. Abul-Fawaris al-Kirmanī ؓ explained, “The sign of the fear of God is scrupulousness and the sign of scrupulousness is in abandoning all that is dubious.”

8. It was also said, “Avoid falsehood, disloyalty and blasphemy and then do whatever you want.”

9. The righteous said, “Whoever lowers his gaze from the forbidden and restrains himself from the suspicious and keeps his inner life under vigilant awareness of God and his outward appearance by following the *Sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ and makes himself accustomed to consuming lawful food, his intuition will not be mistaken.”

10. Shaqiq ؓ said, “The four most worthy moral qualities of a person are: being meek in anger, generous in poverty, truthful in all circumstances and scrupulous in solitude.”

11. Some of the theological scholars observed, “A person’s scrupulousness will not be improved upon until he considers ten things to be mandatory:

(1) Guarding the tongue against blasphemy;

(2) refraining from ridiculing others;

(3) avoidance of mistrust;

(4) lowering the gaze from the forbidden;

(5) sincerity of the tongue;

(6) acknowledgment of Allah’s mercy, so as not to admire oneself and one’s own merits;

(7) spending one’s money on that which is truth and not in falsehood;

(8) rejection of ambition and arrogance;

(9) conservation of the prescribed prayers and striving to perform them with Muslims collectively and

(10) constant and strict adherence to the path of the people of the *Sunna*.”

EXAMPLES OF THE SCRUPULOUSNESS OF RIGHTEOUS PREDECESSORS

Below are provided a few stories which were told by righteous predecessors about abstinence and scrupulousness in the observance of the prescriptions of religion.

1. It is transmitted that, “Hasan ibn Abu Sannan ؓ did not sleep lying down, did not eat fatty foods and did not drink cold water.”

2. Al-Harith al-Muhasibi’s ؓ father was a follower of the Qadarites.⁶³ When his father died, al-Harith ؓ out of scrupulousness for his religion refused his inheritance. This was because of the prohibition of inheritance between Muslims and others, as according to a hadith, “Representatives of two different religions do not receive inheritance from one other.”

3. Abu `Ali ad-Daqqaq ؓ said, “Whenever al-Harith al-Muhasibi ؓ stretched his hand toward any food of suspicious origin, a vein in his fingertip would begin to throb and he would know that it was not permissible for him. Once, Junaid al-Baghdadi ؓ brought al-Harith ؓ food from a relative’s wedding feast. However, al-Harith ؓ refused it. But when, after a few days, they presented him with dry pieces of bread, he ate them and said, “When you bring food to a *murid*, it is better like this.”

4. Hamdun al-Qassar ؓ was attending to a friend at his last moment. After his death, Hamdun ؓ put out the oil lamp. Someone asked him about this. He answered, ‘Until this moment the oil has belonged to him, but now it belongs to his heirs.’”

5. Imam ash-Sha`rani ؓ said, “Vows were taken from us that we would not allow servants to enter our families, even if they were deprived of passions (i.e., were eunuchs).”

Righteous predecessors preferred the abstention of luxury in food, drink, clothing and housing. On this basis, the ruler of the faithful, `Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ, forbade his son to partake of

⁶³ This was a misled group which asserted that the predestination of Almighty Allah is rather a person’s own business, i.e. a person himself is the creator of his deeds and not the Almighty. It appeared during the Umayyad Caliphate.

two different dishes at the same time, if one of them was enough to satisfy his hunger, and ordered him to give away for charity everything beyond the necessary.

CHAPTER 18

RETREATING FROM PEOPLE

THE HARM OF EXCESSIVE MINGLING WITH PEOPLE

Know that seclusion (*retreat*) (*khalwat*) is abstaining from mingling with people, even when one is among them. Seclusion (*`uzlat*) is distancing oneself from state officials by rejecting avaricious temptations for the material values which they hold and also distancing oneself from the wishful dreams and passions of the *nafs* due to scrupulousness (*wara`*).

It is transmitted from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, “Safety is in solitude and affliction is between two people. May your bodies be with people and your hearts with Allah.” He ﷺ also said, “I have a special time for abiding with Allah, in which there is no place either for an angel close to Allah or a sent prophet.” They say that this is the time of solitude.

Know that whoever mixes a lot with people does not covet the sweetness of worship. It is feared that whoever loves the world excessively will have a bad end. And for whoever chooses the company of the oppressor, do not hope that there be in him the integrity of religion. Whoever seeks the satisfaction of people rarely finds the satisfaction of Almighty Allah.

The most beneficial actions for a servant are: perpetual quietude; staying at home and withdrawing from people - not for reasons of arrogance and pride but through considering oneself unworthy of appearing amongst people and the conviction that you can bear them the same harm as a snapping dog.

There is no doubt that no one will escape from committing sins when consorting with people. Even if a person can save his tongue

from the sinful, he will certainly hear the sinful. And the listener is an accomplice of the speaker in sin.

It is said that Junaid al-Baghdadi ة said, “Whoever wants his religion to remain intact and his body calm, let him withdraw from people. Truly this is a time when a rational person is seized with fear and anxiety, except for whoever has chosen solitude for himself.”

CHAPTER 19

MODESTY AND HUMILITY THE ESSENCE OF MODESTY AND HUMILITY

Modesty (*tawadu`*) is complete surrender to the will of Almighty and forswearing objection to God’s decree. Humility (*khushu`*) is the state when the heart’s whole attention is concentrated on the thought of Almighty Allah.

It is also said that humility is the abasement of your heart before the One Who knows that which is hidden, and it is also said that humility is a feebleness that enters upon the heart when one contemplates (one’s) Lord. The Almighty said (meaning), “The servants of the All-Merciful are those who walk the earth modestly and when the ignorant address them (with bad words) they respond with mild words of gentleness.” (Sura al-Furqan, ayah 63) That is (they walk) in submissiveness and humility, with serenity and modesty, and if the ignorant address them, they respond to them with an answer in which they are safe from falling into sin.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said the following, “The Almighty has sent me down a revelation, that you should behave with modesty so that no one displays arrogance and oppresses anyone”; “Sufficient evil for a son of Adam is in their pointing their fingers at him on account of his religion or worldly life, excepting one who Almighty Allah protects.”; “There are three destructive qualities which result in a person’s perdition: miserliness, pursuit of passions and self-admiration” and “No one in whose heart there is a grain of pride will ever enter Paradise; and no one in whose heart there is a grain of faith will ever enter hellfire.”

Abu Yazid al-Bastami ؓ said he heard a secret voice, “O Abu Yazid, the repositories of the Almighty are overflowing with worship. If you want to attain knowledge of the Almighty, show your need for the Lord⁶⁴ and your self-abasement.”

SIGNS OF MODESTY

Know that arrogance is non-acceptance of truth, disdain for people and contempt for them. And the signs of humility are the abidance to the truth, being compassionate and gentle toward your fellow creatures, as well as the acceptance of the truth no matter from whence it may come. To humility also belongs the abandonment of distinctions in serving people, the recognition that no one has need of you either in the affairs of this world or in the affairs of eternal life, and when he sees neither a state nor a station for himself (in this world) and considers none among mankind worse than himself.

EXAMPLES OF THE MODESTY OF RIGHTEOUS PREDECESSORS

Our righteous predecessors, following the example of the Prophet ﷺ, were never arrogant towards one other. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to visit the sick, accompany funeral processions, ride a donkey, accept invitations from servants, feed camels, sweep his house, mend his sandals, patch his clothes, milk the sheep, eat with the servant and help him grind when he was weary. The Prophet ﷺ was not embarrassed to carry his goods from the market to his family. He would shake hands with both the rich and the poor. The Prophet ﷺ was simple with regard to food, he was gentle of character, generous of nature, pleasant of company; his face was cheerful, he smiled much, without laughing and showed his sadness without frowning; he was humble without being self-effacing, generous without being extravagant. He was gentle of heart and compassionate with each

⁶⁴ Perhaps the purport of these words is that there have been many murids who have come to Almighty Allah by worship: fasting, prayer and charitable donations. However, a few of them have come to Him through self-abasement and humility.

Muslim; he never gave signs of having eaten his fill or reached out his hand in greed.

`Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ used to walk at a quick pace and would explain that such walking would bring him swiftly to attend to people's needs and keep him far from vanity. Once, while sitting in company, he went and brought something he needed, they said to him, "If you had ordered us, we would have brought it to you." To which he replied, "I went to do it and I was `Umar, and I returned and still I am `Umar."⁶⁵

It is also conveyed, "When Zayd ibn Thabit ؓ was mounting a camel, Ibn `Abbas ؓ came up to him to hold the stirrup. Zayd said, "Stop, O son of the uncle the Messenger of Allah ﷺ!" "But that is what we have been ordered to do with our learned ones," responded Ibn Abbas. Zayd then took Ibn Abbas' hand, kissed it and said, "This is how we have been commanded to treat the family of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ."

`Urwah ibn Zubayr ؓ related, "When I saw `Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ carrying a heavy water-skin on his shoulder I told him, "O ruler of the faithful, it is not fitting for you to do this!" `Umar ؓ replied, "When deputations of the Arabian tribes came to me, listening and obedient, a certain sense of pride began to steal into my soul. And I wished to break it." So he proceeded with the water-skin to the house of an elderly woman from among the Ansars and emptied it into her jar."

Once when he was ruler of Medina, Abu Huraira ؓ was seen with a bundle of firewood on his back. As he walked, he repeated, "Make way for the governor!"

Ibn `Abbas ؓ observed, "Modesty is that a man drinks the portion left behind by his brother."

`Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz ؓ heard that one of his sons had purchased a valuable signet ring with a jewel for one thousand dirhams. So `Umar wrote to him, "I have heard that you have bought a gem worth one thousand dirhams. When this letter reaches you,

⁶⁵ Probably the essence of these words is that this act in no way diminished his dignity.

sell the ring and fill one thousand stomachs. Then buy a ring worth two dirhams, make its signet of Chinese iron, and inscribe on it, 'May God have mercy upon the one who knows his true worth'."

When `Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz ؓ delivered a public sermon to Muslims, someone estimated his garments to be worth twelve dirhams. These were a caftan, a turban, a shirt, trousers, a pair of slippers and a hat and a hood.

Ibrahim ibn Adham ؓ said, "In Islam I have been delighted twice. The first time I was on board a ship and there was a man who was a jokester. He would remark, 'We used to grab a captive infidel in the lands of the Turks thus' and he would tug at my hair and shake me back and forth. This would please me as there was no one more contemptible in his eyes on board. The second time I was resting in a mosque overcome with a sickness, and when the mosque's *muezzin* came and told me to leave, I could not. So he grabbed me by my foot and dragged me out of the mosque."

One of the righteous said, "It is not generous to use a guest as a servant"

ADMONITION FOR THE ARROGANT

O Muslims, reflect on everything through the insight of your heart and you will find the Almighty in everything and that He is the Creator in all things. How can you scorn the creations of Allah?

The point of the matter is that you should not miss witnessing the glorification of the creations of Almighty Allah with the sight of your eyes and heart. Know that a *murid* will not attain perfection until he ceases to notice the flaws in others. As long as a *murid* sees the shortcomings of people, he needs someone who will improve and discipline him and lead him to the level qualified for the insight of angels, prophets and the righteous.

The following once occurred with Sheikh Muhyiddin ibn al-`Arabi ؓ. When he embarked on a ship, the wind rose and a storm began. He said, "Calm down, O lake, there is a sea of knowledge above you!" Following his words, the waves subsided and a huge

animal emerged and addressed the sheikh, “O Muhyiddin, I will ask you one question and if you answer it, you will be a scholar, and, if not, an ignoramus.” He asked, “What kind of question?” The animal said, “If Allah turns a woman’s husband into something which is not a man, what will be her *`idda* period: like that of a woman whose husband has died or like one who has got a divorce?” The sheikh did not know what to say. Then the animal said, “If you make me your sheikh-mentor, I will answer this question.” The scholar agreed and the animal replied, “If the husband was turned into a living being, then the woman observes *`idda*⁶⁶ as after a divorce. And if he was metamorphosed into an inanimate object, then the *`idda* will be as after the death of a husband.” After this incident and until his death not a hint was heard from Sheikh Muhyiddin ﷺ that he possessed knowledge.

Reflect on the following words that you might say, “If I were not afraid that someone would lord it over me if I should belittle myself and be modest in his presence, then I would do so for him.” In these words are contained the mark of arrogance. This is because you put yourself above your brother and then afterwards it is as though you were descending to his level. As for the modesty of those who know Allah, this is devoid of arrogance, for they do not regard their spiritual degree to be higher than that of any other Muslim. The prophets, with their infallibility, nevertheless asked Almighty Allah to protect them from Satan and from the tribulation of the false messiah – *dajjal*. Our master Ali al-Khawwas ﷺ said, “The trials of the *dajjal* is in the fear for the justification of his claims to divine qualities when they see him.” In a hadith it is conveyed that Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Greatness and pride are My garment.⁶⁷ I will ruin whoever wants to take one of them from Me.”

O Muslims, beware of judging anyone. Verily, Almighty Allah has kings in the form of servants, just as there are servants in the form of kings. The Almighty often clothes His servant in the robe of servitude (*`ubudiya*) before Him and makes him a servant in his own eyes but a master in the eyes of others. Know that whoever thinks

66 *`idda* is a specified period of time during which a woman whose husband has died or who has been divorced does not have the right to marry another.

67 i.e., attributes that are innate only to the Lord.

that his *nafs* is better than that of a pharaoh, displays arrogance. There is no debtor more procrastinating in the repayment of a debt longer than the *nafs*. There is no greater enemy than Satan. There is no adversary stronger than desires. Nothing repels the Almighty's favours like arrogance, for rain accumulates only in the lowlands and not on the tops of the mountains. It is the same with the hearts of the arrogant: mercy descends from their hearts and settles in the hearts of those who are modest. Be aware that it is those who do not accept the truth who are arrogant and not those who dress gracefully and beautifully. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Arrogance is ingratitude for the truth." That is rejection of it and contempt for others. Do not think, however, that arrogance is inherent only in high-ranking or wealthy people. Sometimes it can be inherent even in someone who has no food for dinner. Pride only ruins and never restores. This is because it is an arrogant attitude towards the creations of Almighty Allah.

Know that no matter what heinous affairs sinners may be involved in, you must not consider yourself to be better than them. If a *murid* considers himself better than a dog or a fly, he is devoid of the perfection of elevated people (sheikhs). You can be angry with sinners because, having left the truth, they have followed falsehood and have been distanced from the path of Allah the Most Perfect. Anger in this state will be anger for the sake of Allah.⁶⁸ Indeed, it is possible that sinners may repent and turn to Allah and their position become better than ours. Ash-Sha`rani رحمه الله asked his mentor Ali al-Khawwas رحمه الله, "How can I, as a scholar in quest of knowledge, consider myself to be lower than the ignorant and the wicked?" His mentor replied, "In actuality, the superiority of some people in relation to others lies not in their essence (i.e. in their bodies) but rather in their attributes. Think about the words of the Almighty (meaning), "Say, O Prophet: 'I, too, am a man like you and revelation is sent down to me.'" (Sura al-Kahf, ayah 110) The Almighty did not distinguish between people and the Prophet ﷺ except in the receiving of revelations and with regard to submissiveness before the Almighty, for whose sake all people are created. From this it

68 i.e., without demeaning themselves and not being angry with themselves but rather with their disobedience and sin.

is clear that people's dignity in relationship to one other is only in that which is dependable and unchanging. But knowledge and the human condition are changing." Therefore, O Muslims, if you are deprived of knowledge, then the dignity through which you saw yourself as being above ignorance will leave you. In the presence of the prophet Musa عليه السلام, two people began to boast of their noble birth and lineage. One of them said, "I am so and so, the son of so and so," and enumerated his ancestors to the ninth generation. Then the Almighty sent a revelation to the prophet Musa عليه السلام, "Tell him, 'All your predecessors are burning in the fire of Hell and you will follow them as number ten.'"

Know that three deeds are among the actions of the honourable: first, they love to spend their means on the needy; second, they love to help vulnerable Muslims; third, they love modesty and bearing the difficulties of others. Abu Saïd رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The scholars of the Merciful, may He be exalted and glorified, are the possessors of humility and modesty. And the scholars of rulers⁶⁹ are the possessors of pride and arrogance."

It was also said, "Modesty is a divine favour that is not envied and insolence is an affliction that evokes no pity. Dignity lies in modesty, and one who seeks it in pride will never find it."

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever likes people to exalt him by standing let him ascend to his seat in the Hell." Covenants were taken by righteous predecessors that they would honour people according to their level of modesty. Therefore, the most deserving of respect and cordiality is one who is most submissive to the Almighty and shows modesty in relation to others.

My master Abdulqadir al-Jilani رحمته الله said, "I achieved knowledge of Allah not through nocturnal vigils and daytime fasts but through generosity, modesty, soundness of heart, appeal to the Creator with the language of abasement and poverty, recognition of the mercy and blessings of Almighty Allah and renunciation of my own strength and power to do anything at all."

69 Impious scholars who pursue selfish ends.

Almighty Allah gives the possessor of humility the opportunity to draw near to Him. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever the Almighty reveals Himself to, will certainly be humble.” When a servant of the Merciful manifests oppression against someone or enters into dispute with him, it becomes evident to us that he is not one of those whom the Almighty has brought closer to Him.

CHAPTER 20

COUNSEL

Know, O Muslims, verily religion is edification as stated in the hadith, “Religion is *nasihah* (sincere advice).” Companions asked, “To whom?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and the common folk.”

There are ethical rules that a mentor must adhere to. These include:

1. Sincerity of intention to give guidance only for the sake of Allah and not with the aim of gaining fame or lulling one’s anger.

2. To advise in secret and not in the presence of people, for in the latter situation it is transformed into exposure.

3. To show kindness and gentleness during advice, so as not to upset the instructed.

4. The mentor must himself follow what he instructs, so as not to fall into the disgrace of Almighty Allah. The Lord said (meaning), “O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do? It is severely hateful in Allah’s sight that you say what you do not do.” (Sura as-Saf, ayat 2-3) The most needed guidance is that by which a person will instruct his *nafs* so that it does not lead him into the gates of evil and not cast him into the perdition evoked by repudiating the righteous (*awliya*) of Almighty Allah. If he is to repudiate them out of his own ignorance, then he must first acquire proper knowledge by reading books written by true *‘ulama* about the life activities, instruction and worship of these righteous ones. After all, one is forbidden to repudiate that which one does not know.

Almighty Allah said (meaning), “Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be asked about.” (Sura al-Isra, ayah 36) That is, you should not follow what you yourself do not know. Verily, the Almighty will ask you about all the deeds that these parts of the body have perpetrated.

In the end, it comes down to three things: follow that of which the righteousness is utterly clear to you; distance yourself from that of which its falsehood has become clear to you and turn to one who is knowledgeable about what is doubtful to you.

CHAPTER 21

SHAKING HANDS

Know that it was the tradition of the Companions ﷺ to shake hands when meeting and parting. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Shake hands with each other, this will avert hatred.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said, “A complete greeting is in taking the hand and shaking hands with the right hand.” The Prophet ﷺ also noted, “The first to embrace was the prophet Ibrahim ؑ and before that both sides made a bow as a sign of greeting. And Islam brought the handshake.” A hadith says, “If two Muslims meet and shake hands, having given praise to Allah and they ask Him for forgiveness, Allah will forgive the sins of both of them.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “If two Muslims meet and one of them greets the other, then the most beloved of both to Allah will be the one who is more cordial to his friend. When they shake hands, one hundred mercies of Allah will come upon them: ninety on the one who first greeted and ten on the other.”

CHAPTER 22

HONOURING ONE'S PARENTS

Know, O Muslims, that the beloved Prophet ﷺ told us that the most righteous relationship for a child is maintaining good relationships with those who his parents love. And disobeying parents and causing them distress is one of the most grievous sins. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The gravest of sins is when a person reviles his parents.” Companions asked, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, how can a person revile his parents?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “He vilifies the father of another person and that person vilifies his father; he berates the mother of another and that person berates his mother.”

Almighty Allah, has enjoined honouring one's parents, saying in the Quran (meaning), “Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and do good to parents. If any one of them or both of them reach old age, do not say to them: “uff” (out of anger or contempt) and do not scold them but address them with respectful words. And submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion, and say, “My Lord, be merciful to them as they have brought me up in my childhood.” (Sura al-Isra, ayat 23-24)

Almighty Allah ordered every adult and accountable person (*mukallaf*) to worship Him alone and connected this with the command to be kind towards his parents. How are these commands related? Just as the true reason for our birth is only Allah and He is the one who really raised us, so one's parents are the visible cause of our birth and who visibly bring us up. Such attributes of Almighty Allah as creation, divinity and mercy towards man were first manifested through our parents. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Honouring one's parents is more valued than additional prayer, fasting, *Hajj*, *Umrah* and *jihad* in the cause of Allah.” The obligation to have a good relationship towards parents is reinforced when they reach old age, because with age their need for this increases. Therefore, it is forbidden for us to express discontent and annoyance with our parents even

with the word “tsk!” And this is the least that people say to show their discontent. Ibn `Abbas ؓ said, “If there were an even smaller word to express discontent than “tsk”, the Almighty would have forbidden it.”

CHAPTER 23

SADNESS

Know that sorrow is one of the qualities of the wayfarers on the Sufi path and Almighty Allah loves every sorrowful heart. Whenever God loves a servant, He places a mourner in his heart, and whenever He hates a servant, He places a flute in his heart.

The Prophet ﷺ was constantly in a state of sadness and endless reflection. If there is no sorrow in the heart, it becomes dilapidated, just as the house falls into ruin if there is no tenant. A person’s grief is indicated by his frequent sighing. Sorrow also restrains a person from eating in calmness. The majority of what the believer will find in his ledger of good deeds on the Day of Judgment will be sadness and sorrow. There is *zakat* due on everything, and the *zakat* of the mind is prolonged sorrow. Sufyan ibn `Uyayna ؓ said, “If there is one who is grief-stricken crying in a community, then God will pardon them all because of his tears.”

CHAPTER 24

HUNGER

Hunger is among the qualities of this group of people (the Sufis) and one of the pillars of striving. The ethic concerning hunger is to limit one’s daily meal to the size of a cat’s ear. Hunger is light and satiety is fire. This fire will not subside until it consumes its host. The key to this world is filling one’s stomach, and the key to the Hereafter is hunger.

In books it is mentioned that when Fatima ؓ brought a piece of bread to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he asked her, “What is this, O Fatima?” She replied, “This is a flat bread that I baked. My soul did

not find tranquility until I brought you a piece of it.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “This is the first bit of food to enter your father’s mouth in three days.”

When one of the sheikhs cried out from severe hunger, he was asked about the reason, to which he replied, “Do you not know that Allah’s intended purpose in my hunger is my weeping?”

A sheikh was asked about a person who ate once a day. He responded, “This is the meal of the truthful (*siddiqun*).” He then was asked about those who consume two meals a day. He replied, “This is the eating of believers.” And when he was asked about one who eats three times a day, he replied, “Tell his family to build a feeding trough for him.”

One of the students of Abu Abdullah bin Khafif ؓ said, “A teacher told me to bring him ten raisins every evening for our breaking of the fast. I took pity on him and one night served him fifteen. He then looked at me and asked, “Who told you to bring so many?” He ate only ten of them and left the rest untouched.”

CHAPTER 25

STEADFASTNESS (ISTIQAHAH)

Steadfastness⁷⁰ entails leaving behind what is familiar, abandoning convention and habits and standing before God firm in the inner reality of truthfulness. O my children, be among those who believe in the secret and the evident and enter into the circle of steadfastness (*istiqaah*) - it is more sublime than divine beneficence (*karamah*).

Remember that the presence of *istiqaah* makes the fear of God perfect. *istiqaah* is inducing one’s *nafs* to observe morals spoken of in the Quran and hadith. The Almighty said (meaning), “(O Muhammad), Keep to forgiveness and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant.” (Sura al-A`raf, ayah 199)

⁷⁰ Steadfast and rigorous adherence to the right path.

In relation to one's contemporaries, be like a father to the younger and like a son to the older. Summon people to the path of your Lord through wisdom⁷¹ and beautiful exhortations and engage in kind argumentation with them. Be of gentle disposition, addressing people at the level of their understanding and in a language they understand. Then there is hope that Allah will make you one of the trusted and reliable people and give you believers to help you. Do not forsake the circle of *istiqamah* and do not count upon Allah to shield you from being tested (*makr*), for this is the most concealed of the hidden.

Almighty Allah said (meaning), "Verily, those who have declared, 'Our Lord is Allah' and then remained steadfast, on them the angels will descend, saying, "Do not fear, and do not grieve; and be happy with the good news of the Jannah (Paradise) that you had been promised. (Sura Fussilat, ayah 30) By the words of the Almighty, "then remained steadfast" is meant that believers committed deeds sincerely for the sake of Allah and were engaged in the worship of the Creator in accordance with the requirements of the Shari'a. Abu Bakr as-Siddiq ؓ commented that this means that they do not associate anyone or anything with God. `Umar ؓ believed that the meaning of this statement is that they did not swindle others like foxes.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Be steadfast even though you will never be able to do so completely."⁷² Know that the best part of your religion is prayer and only the true believer is capable of preserving his ritual purity."

Also know that steadfastness (*istiqamah*) is a degree that makes one's affairs sound and complete. Only great men can maintain this level. We give a story transmitted from one of the sheikhs in confirmation. He dreamed of the Prophet ﷺ, whom he asked, "O Messenger of Allah, it is reported that you said, 'When the Sura Hud was sent down, I turned grey-headed.' What made your hair turn grey: parables about the prophets or stories about the destruction of nations?" He replied, 'Not they but the words

71 Implementing that which you teach others by yourself or with the help of the Quran.

72 Or: You won't be able to stay on the right path due to your strength and abilities.

of the Almighty (meaning), “So be steadfast as you have been commanded.” (Sura Hud, ayah 112)

CHAPTER 26

LOVE OF COURTESY

Know, O Muslims, that one who has lived peaceably, has lived the life of a martyr (*shahid*). Because maintaining peaceful relations with others is a moral quality of prophets and the truthful ones (*siddiqun*). For one who is gentle, polite and at ease in relations with others, Allah makes Hell forbidden. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ was a very gentle person to the utmost degree. Whenever his companions spoke of the worldly life, he discussed worldly life with them and when they spoke of the eternal life, he also spoke about Hereafter and when they talked about food, the Prophet ﷺ talked about.

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ said, “Today you find yourselves (vacillating) between being strict and being severe. The Prophet ﷺ was always at ease and compassionate with his servants, slaves and all his companions.”

Almighty Allah said (meaning), “And He is Ever Most Merciful to the believers.” (Sura al-Ahzab, ayah 43) Another ayah says (meaning), “Surely, there has come to you, from your midst, a Messenger who feels it very hard on him if you face suffering, who is very anxious for your welfare, and for believers is very kind and very merciful.” (Sura at-Tawbah, ayah 128) This means that the Messenger who came to you is a man like you. Allah elevated him for his distinction above others and therefore put on him a robe of clemency and appointed him over you for the evidences of being sympathetic and compassionate to you. Most of all, he is concerned that you believe in Allah.

The meaning of the above can also be expressed as follows: O Arabs, a Messenger has come to you, who like you, is an Arab and speaks in your own language. For you see the commonality of language brings people closer to mutual friendship and sympathy, alleviates disagreement and makes it possible to quickly understand

one another's contentions. Guidance on the right path is impossible without knowledge of the language of the person whom you are teaching.

The Prophet ﷺ is also the first substance of that which Almighty Allah has created.

Abu Huraira ؓ related that the Prophet ﷺ asked the angel Jibril, "O Jibril, how old are you?" He replied, "O Messenger of Allah, I do not know how old I am but in the fourth heaven there is a star that rises once every seventy thousand years. I have seen this star seventy-two thousand times." Then the Prophet ﷺ said, "O Jibril, I swear by the greatness of my Lord, this star is I."

Having created the prophet Adam ؑ, the Almighty placed the light (*nur*) of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ on his back and *nur* shone on Adam's forehead ؑ. The noble descent and origin of the Prophet ﷺ are the best among all Allah's creations. And his ﷺ pure soul is the most exalted among pure souls. His ﷺ tribe is the most worthy of all tribes. His ﷺ language is the best of all languages. The Book sent down to him ﷺ is the best of all the Divine Scriptures. His ﷺ Companions and family are the best of companions and households. The time of his ﷺ birth is the best of times. And his ﷺ radiant burial chamber of ar-Rawdah is the most highly esteemed place on earth. Water that flowed from his ﷺ noble fingers was the best of all waters. Allah's words "who feels it very hard on him if you face a hardship, who is very anxious for your welfare" mean that the Prophet ﷺ is ardent about your faith and the improvement of your conditions. And the words "and for the believers he is very kind and very merciful" mean that his ﷺ compassion and mercy are directed only to believers. That is why it was said: politeness in all matters is like musk among all other perfumes.

CHAPTER 27

JUSTICE

Know that justice is not following one's *nafs* in what it desires.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Establishing justice for an hour is better than worshipping for sixty years." When the prophet Musa عليه السلام prayed for the Almighty to destroy the pharaoh, Allah sent him down the revelation, "O Musa, his unbelief does not harm Me and for My servants there is benefit from his just order." But when the pharaoh began to oppress people and combined injustice with his disbelief, Allah destroyed him.

CHAPTER 28

LOVE AND ABHORRENCE FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH

Know, O Muslims, that whoever loves worldly life will never be relieved of the hatred of certain people. The Prophet explained this by associating detachment from the worldly with the love of people. He said, "Renounce that which is in others' hands and they will love you." The more a person loves the worldly, the more enemies he has.

When you abhor for the sake of Allah, this abhorrence should be directed only at qualities and attributes, and not at the essence of creatures of Allah. This is because the essence created by Allah is His own very creation and does not change.

Reflect upon the words of the Prophet ﷺ about garlic, "This is a plant whose smell I do not like." Note that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not say that he abhors garlic, rather he said that he did not like its smell.

O Muslims, I will teach you the criteria by which you can determine whether your objection towards certain people arises for the sake of Allah or for the sake of the whims of your own *nafs*. Compare the deeds of the person towards whom you have misgivings with the Quran and *Sunna*. If his deeds are praised in them, love him. But if they are

condemned in them, then show your dissatisfaction. This evaluation should be followed so that it does not turn out to be that you either love or abhor a person because of the whims of your *nafs*. A vow was taken from us that we would not subject any Muslim to abhorrence for the sake of the whims of our *nafs*. But as for the disobedient and the reprobate who openly surrender to sin, we are obliged to abhor them for Almighty Allah's sake and this is not considered from merely having a bad opinion of something.⁷³

CHAPTER 29

CONTENTMENT

Know that contentment is to abandon desire for what is lost, and satisfaction of the *nafs* with the sustenance that has been apportioned to it. Whoever is contented is rich, even though he be hungry. The intelligent one is he who arranges the concerns of the world with contentment and at a slow pace, the concerns of the afterlife with greed and haste and the concerns of religion with knowledge and striving.

Contentment with what one has requires that a person eats only once a day. One who eats twice a day is already named as not being content with little.

Almighty Allah assigned five attributes to five practices: greatness - to obedience to Allah; debasement - to disobedience to Allah; reverence - to night vigil in worship; wisdom - to an empty stomach; wealth - to contentment with what one has. Al-Kattani رحمته الله said, "Whoever sells greed for contentment gains glory and valor."

One of the pious recounted, "When I was sitting next to Junaid al-Baghdadi رحمته الله during the season of the pilgrimage, someone came up with five hundred dinars and, putting them in front of the scholar, said, "Distribute these amongst the *murids*." Junaid رحمته الله then asked, "Do you still have any more dinars?" He replied, "Yes, I have many more." The scholar asked, "And do you wish for more than

⁷³ We hate a person's sinfulness but not the person himself. We must love each person as an individual being.

you possess?” The man answered affirmatively. Then Junaid ؒ said, “Take your dinars, for you need them more than we do” and did not accept the money from him.

CHAPTER 30

SILENCE

Know, O Muslims, that silence (at the right time is the proper) attribute for men and it is one of the manners proper in attending a Sufi gathering (*hadrah*). If a servant speaks only about what concerns him or is unavoidable, then he is within the bounds of silence. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged silence, “Guard your tongue, for whoever maintains silence will be saved. Be content with your house, and weep for your sins.” If speaking pleases you, be silent. If silence pleases you, speak.

CHAPTER 31

KEEPING A LOW-PROFILE

Know that all good lies in being inconspicuous.⁷⁴ Do not hasten to make your affairs public, given the state of contemporary society and the morals of people of our time. It is said:

Popularity is tribulation
But all crave it.
Inconspicuousness is serenity
Yet all eschew it.

Bishr al-Hafi ؒ said, “Whoever loves popularity will not find the sweetness of eternal life.” One of the sheikhs gave guidance to his student thus, “Always be in humiliation and defeat, and do not enter into the horrors of the world and places of fame. Leave the worldly and pride for its people, rather be of its hate and taste its bitterness. Draw a positive lesson from friends and acquaintances who have left this mortal world. Know that they do not disappear but remain where they are until we join them and be with them.”

⁷⁴ i.e. abandonment of publicity and fame in every matter.

CHAPTER 32

VISITING BROTHERS IN FAITH

In books it is written that two brothers in faith met and one of them asked the other, “Where have you come from?” The second answered, “I made the pilgrimage to the Sacred House (Ka`ba) and visited the tomb of the Prophet ﷺ. And where have you returned from?” The first replied, “I am returning from visiting my brother by faith who I love for the sake of Allah.” The one who had completed the pilgrimage then asked him, “Would you exchange your reward for visiting your brother in faith with the reward of my pilgrimage?” He, bowing his head, remained silent for a long time. Then he heard a secret voice, “A visit to a brother in faith is dearer to Allah than a hundred-fold supererogatory (*Sunna*) pilgrimage.”

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He who visits his brother in faith is accompanied by seventy thousand angels.”

Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمه الله asked his mentor, Ali al-Khawwas رحمه الله, “Is it worth visiting a brother in faith now or is it better to pass up visiting him because of fears of distracting him from more important matters?” The sheikh responded, “First purify your intention and then visit. Only one who visits for selfish purposes deserves reproach.”

CHAPTER 33

GRATITUDE THE ESSENCE OF GRATITUDE

Know that thankfulness is recognising one’s inability to be thankful. Junaid رحمه الله said in this regard, “Thankfulness is that you do not regard yourself as worthy of blessings. The essence of gratitude lies in recognizing the blessings of Allah with submissiveness. Thankfulness is awareness of the Giver of blessings, not of the blessing.” It is also said, “Gratitude is the heart’s knowledge of the blessings bestowed by Allah and the utterance of the appropriate words of thanks and praise.”

GRATITUDE – A BLESSING FROM ALLAH

Know that gratitude is in itself a blessing from Almighty Allah. If Allah had not endowed you with the ability to express gratitude to Him, you could not have done this yourself.

One of the pious, turning to Allah, said, “O my Allah, how can I express my gratitude to You, when my very act of thanksgiving is yet another blessing from You!” Allah then heartened him thus, “Now you have shown Me true gratitude.” When the prophet Musa عليه السلام turned to Allah, “O Lord, you created Adam عليه السلام and endowed him with various blessings – how did he express his gratitude for this?” The Almighty answered, “He found that all these blessings were from Me and his knowledge of this was his gratitude to Me.”

ONLY ALMIGHTY ALLAH IS WORTHY OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE

Vows were taken from pious people to show gratitude to Allah both when He bestowed them with blessings and when He did not. For they are as – subjects of the Almighty - entrusting themselves to the Creator. And Allah is above betraying a servant who trusts in Him. Also a vow was taken from the righteous that they would not reveal their commendable qualities, except as a sign of gratitude to Almighty Allah or so that others would follow them in this. In other cases, pious people conceal all their meritorious qualities and do this for the sake of Allah. They do not participate in gatherings out of embarrassment and fears that people will praise them in this world. For indeed only Almighty Allah deserves praise.⁷⁵

Imam al-Ghazali رحمه الله explains that praise brings great harm to the praised. Praise gives rise to pride and a high opinion of oneself. And sometimes one takes joy in praise and this blights one’s deeds. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ said, “If you see those who overly praise people, throw dust in their faces.” They also say, “When you are praised, remember that you are made of clay: display modesty and do not admire yourself because of praise.”

⁷⁵ Not wanting people to praise them similarly to their praise of Almighty Allah.

Our master Abul-Hasan ash-Shadhili رحمته الله noted, “When the Almighty desires good for a servant, He will conceal his perfections from him. The Creator turns him into His sincere servant, in whom none of the divine qualities worthy of Almighty Allah only is manifested.” It is befitting for a servant to relinquish all that his *nafs* has become used to through knowledge and its attainment - even if this be secret knowledge (*kashf*) or a special spiritual state (*hal*). If Almighty Allah chose him and was pleased with him as His servant, what indeed can harm him; he will be immune against awareness of his knowledge and praiseworthy deeds.

THE LOWEST DEGREE OF GRATITUDE

Theological scholars say that the lowermost degree of gratitude to the Almighty is the thankfulness of the tongue. There is no person feebler than one who does not express verbal gratitude. Such gratitude should be all-encompassing. The highest degree of verbal gratitude is the recitation by a servant of the Sura al-Fatiha in response to the blessings bestowed on him. While reciting it, may the believer intend to express utmost gratitude thanking all that God’s knowledge encompasses of his blessings: the outward and the inward, the tangible and the intangible, the known to the servant and the unknown to him, of the immediate world and the hereafter, the prior and the delayed, the permanent and the temporary. With such an intention, may the person read this Sura as many times as possible from one to a hundred. The Almighty will record him among those who manifested gratitude. Or, as a reward, this servant will receive still greater blessings corresponding with his intention and in accordance with the promise of Allah.

There are many forms of all-encompassing verbal gratitude and we will not prolong mentioning them. The following words of the Prophet ﷺ provide an example of such gratitude, “I cannot praise You enough, You are as You have praised Yourself.”

The prophet Adam عليه السلام said, “O Lord, You occupied me with earning by my own hands,⁷⁶ so instruct me as to what constitutes all praise and glorification.” Then Almighty Allah sent him the

⁷⁶ i.e., engaged in work through which you earn yourself a living. - Ed.

revelation, ‘O Adam, three times every morning and evening say, ‘*Al-hamdu lillahi rabbil `alamin, hamdan yuwafi ni`amahu wayukafi`u mazidah*’ (‘Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, such praise that replenishes His blessings and is equivalent to His augmentation.’).” These words incorporate all kinds of praise and glorification.

The difference between a thankful servant (*shakir*) and a very thankful servant (*shakur*) is that the *shakir* is thankful for that which the Almighty granted him and the *shakur* for anything Allah deprived him of. Truly, for every blessing there is a corresponding gratitude. Gratitude for the eyes – is in lowering one’s gaze at the sight of the forbidden and of people’s flaws. Gratitude for the ears - is that you conceal a fault you hear about your companion and for the hands – is in not reaching out to other’s property. Gratitude for the legs is in restraining them so that they do not step where the commandments of the Almighty are violated. And this applies also in relation to other parts of the body.

The essence of gratitude is that you use all that God has bestowed upon you for what they were created for, and that includes money, the body, and the external and internal organs. Therefore, when you use any of it for something other than what it was created for, that constitutes ingratitude for that blessing.

THOSE WHO PRAISE ALLAH IN EVERY STATE

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said that the first people to enter Paradise will be those who praise Allah in every state. In another tradition, it is said, “Those who praise Allah in joy and sorrow.” The Prophet ﷺ also said, “The words ‘*al-hamdu lillah*’ are a manifestation of gratitude for every blessing.”

They say that as-Sari as-Saqati ؓ said, “For thirty years, I have asked the forgiveness of Allah for the words ‘Praise be to Allah’ which I once uttered.” He was asked, “How can this be?” He replied, “There was a big fire in Baghdad. I met someone who informed me, “Your shop has survived intact.” Then I said, “Praise be to Allah.” And for thirty years now I have regretted these words, for I wanted to benefit myself while other Muslims suffered.”

They say that Hasan ibn Ali رضي الله عنه, stopping at the corner of the Ka`ba, turned to Allah with the words, “O my Allah, You endowed me with blessings but I did not show gratitude. You tested me with misfortunes but I did not show patience. You did not deprive me of blessings for my ingratitude and did not prolong hardships for my impatience. O my God, there is only generosity from the Generous One.”

CHAPTER 34

PROMOTION OF VIRTUE AND PREVENTION OF VICE

Know that enjoining good and forbidding evil is a command to contribute to the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice. It is conveyed from Ibn `Abbas رضي الله عنه that he asked the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, “O Messenger of Allah, will the earth fail while there are pious people on it?” He replied, “Yes, if they begin to curry favor with others⁷⁷ and are silent when something sinful is committed.”

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also said, “On the Day of Judgment, people from my community will rise from the graves and appear before Almighty Allah in the image of monkeys and pigs because they flattered sinners and did not deter them from disobedience when they were able to do so.” The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم further said, “O Abu Huraira, enjoin good and forbid evil, and be patient for what has befallen you in doing so.”

Imam Abu Said al-Khadimi رضي الله عنه said in his book “Al-Bariqah al-Mahmudah”, “Sycophancy in the Shari`a denotes not changing evil while being able to do so, out of concern for the side of the perpetrator or the side of others, or for lack of indifference to religion.” Imam al-Barkawi رحمته الله, in the book “At-Tariqat al-Muhammadiya”, said, “Such flattery is prohibited.”

Silence should not be kept when it comes to revealing the truth and exposing falsehood. Whoever silences the truth is Satan’s mute. Those who are well-disposed towards sinners will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment in the image of monkeys and pigs. Command

77 i.e. to keep silent about the truth in order to put themselves in a better light.

the doing of good, refrain from evil and benefit from the hadith, “One who guides doing something good has a reward similar to that of its doer.”

Do not fear reproach when it comes to fulfilling the commandments of religion. Pursue the acquisition of knowledge, though it be just a tenth part of it. At-Tirmidhi رحمته الله conveyed from Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه the utterance of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, “You (companions) live at a time when whoever forsakes a tenth of that commanded him by religion will fall into perdition. The time will come when he who has done even a tenth of what he is commanded to do will be saved.”

There are people who bring change to what is condemned by the Shari`a through the word; these are theological scholars. They transform such a situation for the better through politics and kindness rather than violence and arrogance. There are those who redress evil with their hearts — the sheikhs and perfect saints. My master Ibrahim al-Matbuli رحمته الله said, “Changing evil by the hand is for rulers and those close to them, changing it with the tongue is for the practicing scholars and changing it with the heart is for the masters of insight.”

And know, my children, that the evil resulting from condemnation by one who is not worthy of disapproving is greater than the benefit resulting from it, and the *murid* should never take the lead in removing an evil (if there is no corresponding instruction).

They say that there was a certain group of young people who were occupied in the worship of Almighty Allah and consumed only what they earned by their own honest work. Whenever Satan wanted to get closer to one of them, he almost got burned. Once, when they were gathered to commemorate Allah, Satan set a group of nearby troublemakers against one another. They began to beat each other with sticks until they were bloodied. Satan’s objective was for the young people commemorating the Almighty to think that it would be better to save those persons from the evil of this fracas than to remember Allah - as there is benefit for others in the riddance of discord. So the young people stopped their remembrance of

the Almighty and went to separate those who were fighting. The troublemakers fell upon them as they approached. As a result, the troublemakers distracted the righteous from the remembrance of Allah and other devotions. Satan then greatly rejoiced: his main goal had been to disrupt the gathering where the Almighty was being remembered - and nothing more.

In books it is written that someone came to one of the righteous in the past to complain about his neighbor committing sins. The righteous one asked him, "Have you held vigil even for a single night for his sake?" When he answered negatively, he continued, "Hold vigil for seven nights for his sake and address Almighty Allah with a beautiful prayer for him. Almighty Allah will grant him mercy. If he does not repent even after such an act as yours, know that you are worse than him - and then work on improving your *nafs*."

CHAPTER 35

FEAR OF GOD

Know that the fear of God (*taqwa*) is when there is nothing in your heart but Allah. The fear of God has an exterior and interior aspect. Its exterior aspect is preservation of the Shari`a boundaries and its interior aspect is in purity of intention and striving. Almighty Allah called the fear of God the best provision for eternal life. The Creator said (meaning), "And prepare provisions for verily the best provision is the fear of God." (Sura al-Baqarah, ayah 197)

Theological scholars noted, "There is no greater provision than the fear of God." They considered it right to lament for hearts which are devoid of the fear of God. Scholars also said, "If the knowledge of a scholar does not contain the following four qualities, then they do not regard such to be a scholar and do not trust his knowledge, for he is like a donkey loaded with books: *taqwa* in what is between him and God, asceticism in what is between him and the world, humility in what is between him and people, and striving in what is between him and his *nafs*."

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked, “What most of all brings people to Paradise?” He replied, “The fear of God and a good moral disposition.” And then they asked, “And what causes people to enter Hellfire the most?” and he answered, “Two cavities: oral (the tongue) and abdominal (the genital organs).”

CHAPTER 36

TRUST (TAWAKKUL) IN ALLAH THE ESSENCE OF TRUST

Know that trust (*tawakkul*) in God is agitation without rest and rest without agitation. This means that abundance and scarcity are one and the same for you.

Scholars have given many definitions to trust:

1. Trust in God is to prostrate your body in worship, to attach your heart to His lordship and to find solace in sufficiency.

2. Trust in God is to give up planning for yourself.

3. Trust in God is reliance on what is in God’s hand and despairing of whatever is in the hands of men.

4. Trust in God is contentment with Almighty Allah together with reliance upon Him.

5. The angel Jibril said, “Trust in God is despairing of creatures and the realisation that no creation of Allah whatsoever can harm, bring benefit, provide or prevent. The precondition of trust is the heart’s turning away from everything except Allah.”

Trust in God is the attribute of the prophets, peace be upon them. Surrender (*taslim*) was the attribute of the prophet Ibrahim ؑ. Assigning one’s affairs to God (*tafwiz*) is the attribute of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. One who trusts in God is like an infant, who knows of nothing in which he can seek shelter except his mother’s breast. Likewise is one who trusts in God. He is guided only to his Almighty Lord.

FEATURES OF ONE WHO TRUSTS IN ALLAH

One who places trust in Allah can be recognised by distinguishing features. He does not ask. He does not turn anything away when given. He does not hold on to what was given to him. The best state of one who trusts is to be before Almighty Allah exactly as a dead body is before the corpse-washer. Because, you see, the deceased makes no movement nor has a will of its own. Cease planning and completely trust in the choice of Allah. You know that Almighty Allah was for you earlier than you yourself were for your *nafs*. Just as Allah was for you before your creation, so He will be for you after your death. You should elevate people from troubles - this is a criterion of *murids* and perfected people. Just as material bodies are weighed, so the spiritual states and qualities of people are weighed and evaluated. Do not worry about the means of existence! Almighty Allah was for you even before your birth, so how could He forget you after you were born. Do not trouble by doing for yourself what others have done on your behalf.

Bishr al-Hafi ؓ said, “Some lie, saying that they trust in Allah. If they trusted in Allah, they would be contented with whatever He does with them.”

USING REASONS DOES NOT CONTRADICT TRUST

Know that trust in God is the spiritual state of the Prophet ﷺ, and earning a means of existence by his labour is his path (*Sunna*). Whoever adheres to this state will never abandon his *Sunna*. Whoever condemns activity in earning a livelihood condemns the *Sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ. One who criticises trust in God criticises faith (*iman*). Know that the locus of trust in God is the heart. Outward action does not preclude trust in God in the heart.

Narrated from the companion, Anas ibn Malik ؓ. “A man came riding his camel to the Prophet ﷺ and asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, should I leave my camel untied and trust in Allah?’ The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘Tie up your camel and trust in Allah.’”⁷⁸

78 i.e., always put your trust in Allah, when you tie up the camel and afterwards.

Ibrahim al-Khawwas رضي الله عنه was one of the people who put their trust in God. Nevertheless, he would never be without thread, a needle, scissors and a small vessel for ablutions. He used to say, “If you see a *murid* without a vessel for ablutions, thread and a needle, then you should worry about the completeness of his prayer.”

Trust in God does not imply disregarding causations and neglecting prudence in matters. Rather, a wise person should focus on matters by being vigilant about them and seek the means and reasons that people usually employ to accomplish their objectives.

Proceeding from that said above, trust is one of the necessities of faith. Therefore, if trust is absent, then faith is also absent. This is because faith is monotheism and whoever relies on other than God does not solidify his faith in Oneness in reality, even if he asserts it with the tongue. By trust it is not intended the disregarding of causes and relying on what comes from creatures.

The remedy that leads a person to trust in God is zeal in five things: the first is the realisation that Almighty Allah is aware of your condition; the second is the conviction of the totality of the power of the Almighty; the third is the conviction that Allah is pure of forgetfulness and omission; the fourth is the realisation that He is free from breaking a promise and the fifth is the conviction that the Creator is the Most Generous and that He gives us everything we need without our requesting it.

GOLDEN WORDS ABOUT TRUST

Many statements have been narrated clarifying the essence of trust:

1. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever wants to be the strongest of people, let him put his trust in Allah.”

2. Yahya ibn Mu`adh رضي الله عنه was asked, “When is a man trusting in Allah?” He replied: “When he is contented with Almighty Allah as his guardian.”⁷⁹

79 That all his affairs are created and performed only by Allah.

3. When Ibn Ataillah رحمته الله was asked about the essence of trust in God, he replied, “It is that an anxious desire for things of the world should not appear in you, despite the severity of your need for them and that you should always remain truly content with God, despite your dependence on those things (*asbab*).”⁸⁰

4. Abu Hatim al-Sijistani رحمته الله observed, “The condition of trust in God is what Abu Turab al-Nakhshabi has noted, ‘Casting down the body in worship, attaching the heart to lordship, and being serene as to the matter of sufficiency. If something is given, he is thankful, and if it is withheld, he is patient’.”

5. Dhul-Nun al-Misri رحمته الله said, “Trust in God is abandoning the stratagems of the *nafs* and stripping off reliance on one’s own power and strength, for the servant is only capable of trust in God when he knows that Almighty Allah knows and sees all of his states.”

6. It was also said, “Trust in God is restricting concern for livelihood to one day and refraining from aspirations for the morrow.”

7. Sahl ibn Abdullah رحمته الله said, “Trust in God is abandoning oneself to God in whatever He wishes.”

8. It was also said, “Trusting in Allah (*tawakkul*) is a quality of believers. Surrender (*taslim*) is a quality of Allah’s beloved servants (*awliya*), and assigning one’s affairs to Allah (*tafwiz*) is the quality of those who assert His unity. Therefore, trust in God is the quality of common people, surrender is the quality of the elite and assigning one’s affairs to Allah is the quality of the elite of the elite.”

9. Dhul-Nun al-Misri رحمته الله noted, “Trust in God is deposing all masters (other than God) and cutting one’s attachment to all causes other than God.”⁸¹ And when a questioner asked further in this regard, the scholar continued, “It is casting the *nafs* into servitude to God, and ridding it of any pretension to lordship.”

10. When Abu Abdullah al-Qurshi رحمته الله was asked about trust in God, he replied, “It is being attached to God in every state.”

80 This refers to work, some occupation and physical activity in order to obtain sustenance.

81 Being sure that Allah creates everything and that means themselves have no weight. And all one receives is from Allah.

11. When a scholar was asked what trust was, he replied, “Taking your provisions from Almighty Allah.”⁸²

12. It is also said, “One who puts his trust in God goes through three stages: trust in God (*tawakkul*), self-surrender to God (*taslim*) and relegating one’s affairs to God (*tafwiz*). One who trusts in God finds serenity in the promise of the Almighty.”

13. It is said, “One who surrenders himself to God (*taslim*) is content with his knowledge of God and one who relegates his affairs to God (*tafwiz*) is satisfied with His decree.”

14. Abu Darda ؓ said, “The pinnacle of faith (*iman*) is sincerity, trust in God and complete obedience to the Lord, Almighty and Great.”

15. One of the scholars said, “When Almighty Allah presents you with a choice in something, then be fearful of choosing it yourself. Flee from your own choice to the choice of the Lord, for you see, you do not know what the outcome of the matter will be.”

16. In the Torah is written, “Doomed is he who relies on a person like himself rather than putting his trust in God.”

17. Scholars said, “For someone who relies on Allah and resorts to Him for assistance, the Lord will devise it so that people will need him and will put wisdom in his mouth.”

18. Abu Yazid ؓ was asked, “What is trust in God?” He replied, “And what do you say about it?” His questioner explained, “Our companions say that trust is even if beasts of prey and poisonous snakes were on your right and left, your innermost being would not waver on their account.” Then Abu Yazid ؓ continued, “Yes, this is a definition close to the truth. However, if you were to observe the inhabitants of Paradise enjoying its blessings and the inhabitants of Hell being tormented by its fire and then it occurred to you to prefer one to the other, you would leave the realm of trust in God.”⁸³

82 The realisation that means and causes in themselves give nothing and the assuredness that everything that one receives comes from Allah only.

83 For a slave, there should be no difference as to whether Allah enters him into Paradise or Hell; in everything he must rely on Allah. Having lost all choice for himself, he should be like a dead body before the corpse-washer.

19. Abu Bakr al-Warraq ؓ said, “If they asked of greed who is its parent, it would answer that it is doubt in destiny predetermined by Allah.⁸⁴ If they asked it what its craft was, it would answer - acquiring humiliation. If they asked it what its goal was, it would answer – deprivation.”

20. Sheikh ash-Shadhili ؓ said, “If a person lacks at least one of these five qualities, he does not possess true faith: surrender to Allah’s commands, contentment with His decree, relegating all his affairs to the Creator, trust in the Lord and manifesting patience at the very inkling of impending misfortune.”

21. They said, “Cease hoping for what may be in cities and put your trust in Allah instead.”

THE VIRTUE OF TRUST IN GOD

Know that there is no higher degree before Allah than trust. Whoever trusts in the Almighty, submits to His decree, entrusts all matters to Him and is content with His destiny, has established religion. Whoever challenges trust challenges faith, and he who loves the people of trust also loves God Almighty.

The genesis of trust in God is the knowledge of the trustee that He is the Mighty, the Wise. When a servant realises that there is a great Sovereign Who establishes justice and regulates and predetermines all matters, to Whom belong the treasures of the earth and heaven, then he reflects on his omnipotent Lord and also becomes strong because of this contemplation. Thanks to the Almighty, the servant is elevated and is contented with becoming closer to the Creator, the Mighty and Sublime. Then the worship of the servant becomes definite and his monotheism is purified.

The believer knows people through his knowledge of their Creator and he seeks his sustenance in Allah whom he worships and he does not praise and does not reproach others for anything they

⁸⁴ This is because, if a person who craved the property of others trusted in Almighty Allah and knew that the Lord’s repositories were overflowing and could never be exhausted, no matter how much He gave to others, he would not covet someone else’s property, for what Allah has is enough for everyone.

gave him or deprived him of. For, you see, a servant is convinced that Almighty Allah is the Guardian and Giver of everything. He does not thank the creation except because his Creator commanded him to give thanks to them, imbued with His morals, the Most High, and following the *Sunna* of His Messenger ﷺ.

O Muslims, be steadfast in the detachment of the heart from worldly life and in putting your trust in Allah. Asceticism is a principle in all actions, and trust in God is the root of all spiritual states. Bear witness to Allah and resort to His protection in words, deeds, morals and spiritual states. Whoever cleaves to Allah and seeks help from Him will be guided to the right path. Beware of doubting in Allah, of attributing a partner to Him, of greediness or of objecting to Allah about anything at all.

Worship God with the greatest closeness and you will enjoy love, favouring, designation and authority from God and God is the Guardian of the pious.

Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمه الله asked his mentor Ali al-Khawwas رحمه الله, "Is putting victuals aside in reserve so as not to be worried about sustenance a laudable action?" His mentor replied, "A *murid* should not put aside anything in reserve, except when he knows that this really is his sustenance and there is no one else's share in it. Otherwise, he is not allowed to lay up reserves. This is because the miserliness of his nature is what impels one to do this." Ash-Sha`rani رحمه الله then asked, "If a *murid* knows that this is sustenance for his family which they will receive only through his hands, then can it be placed in reserve?" His mentor replied, "Yes." Imam ash-Sha`rani رحمه الله asked, "And if a *murid* knows that this is his family's lot but Allah did not enlighten him whether or not it would come to them through him specifically, could he then lay up a reserve?" The sheikh answered, "No." Then the imam asked, "And if Allah enlightened the *murid* that those closest to him receive their lot only through him, but at a specified time he did not receive it?" His mentor replied, "Then he has the right to either maintain a reserve until that specified time or to consume it. He is the custodian of this lot for them."

Ash-Sha`rani رحمته also asked his mentor, “Some *murids* go on the *Hajj* every year without having the necessary provisions. Is this praiseworthy or reproachable?” His mentor replied, “This is reprehensible. This is because Almighty Allah imposed the availability of facilities for the performance of the pilgrimage, so as to protect a person from having to endure inconveniences on the journey and embarrassment in front of others (because of insufficient means and need to turn to them) and from having ill disposition and grudges towards those who did not help him with sustenance or transport. For you see, falling into such a situation is inevitable, and this is conveyed from our righteous predecessors. And as for those who harm others with their tongue by exaggerating in insults, their travel is prohibited.”

He also asked his mentor, “Can I be engaged in some sort of craft in order to feed myself?” He replied, “Entrust everything to Almighty Allah and do not choose anything yourself without asking His permission and until He so permits. Sustenance spins in search of the servant for whom it is intended. But the servant, searching for his sustenance is at a loss, not knowing where to go. If either of them (sustenance or servant) stops, the other will seek it out. Therefore, they say that chasing after one’s sustenance is not a good thing because it is equivalent to rejecting toiling for one’s sustenance. The sustenance of a servant is classified into two kinds:

1. Sustenance that comes to you without your own efforts, such as, for example, an inheritance. Concerning this kind of sustenance, they say that its pursuit is unworthy.

2. Sustenance to receive which it is necessary to exert effort. Therefore, with regard to such a sustenance, they say that toiling to attain it is more valued.”

CHAPTER 37

POSITIVE OPINION ABOUT ALMIGHTY ALLAH

Know, Muslims, that a positive opinion of Almighty Allah is a fundamental element of opinions of previous and subsequent generations of people. Almighty Allah says in a holy hadith (meaning), “I am as My servant thinks of Me. So may he have a good opinion of Me.” In another tradition it is said, “So let a servant think of Me as he wishes.” Judicious is one who improves his opinion of his Lord in every inhalation and exhalation of his breathing.

If you think that Allah will not ruin you in this life and will not entrust you to yourself even for the blink of an eye, then the Creator will do just that. If you think that the Almighty will redress that which you violated of the rights of other people and will not punish you for this, then this He will also do. If you think that the Almighty will cause you to die in monotheism, the Lord will grant you this. If you think that Allah will save you from the horrors of the Day of Judgment, the Creator will do just that. If you think that the Creator will not hold you accountable and ask about anything, then He will do this. If you think that the Almighty will strengthen your feet on the bridge of *Sirat*, then He will do this. If you think that the Creator will enter you into Paradise, He will grant you this as well.

CHAPTER 38

PATIENCE WITH A WIFE’S HARM

Know, O Muslims, that the habit of the righteous is to be patient with their families and be tolerating of harm from them. Many stories have been conveyed about this including the one about Sheikh Ahmad ar-Rifai رحمته الله who had an ill-tempered wife who harmed him with her tongue. Someone dreamt that the sheikh possessed a degree that pleased Allah. Once this person entered the scholar’s house and saw that the sheikh’s wife was beating him with a poker on the shoulders and his clothes had turned black. The sheikh, however, remained silent. Most perturbed, the man left the

sheikh's house. He then met with the sheikh's *murids* and asked, "O people, how can you remain silent, while this woman does so much harm to our sheikh?" One of the *murids* said, "The price of the *mahr* (wedding present) of this woman is five hundred gold coins and the sheikh is a poor man." The man then gathered five hundred dinars, carried them to the sheikh on a tray and laid them in front of him. The sheikh asked, "What is this?" He replied, "This is the dowry of this wretch who did such-and-such to you." Then the sheikh smiled and said, "If I had not had the patience to tolerate her beatings and tongue, you would not have seen me in an exalted state."

When one of the righteous wanted to divorce his wife, they asked him, "What harm did she do you?" He replied, "An intelligent man does not expose his wife." And when after the divorce he was asked, "Why did you divorce her?" He replied, "What business is it of mine to talk about a woman who has become a stranger to me."

Therefore, I will to you, O my children, that you be good to your wives. Show the best of morals towards them, be gentle and live in joy and contentment. People criticise the likes of us (*murids*) for even the slightest omission. They consider our most insignificant flaws and deeds to be considerable. Be extremely careful and cautious about what people may reproach us for, be it words or deeds. Be contented, pleasant, friendly and comforting with your spouses. May Allah make the outcome of your life together blessed!

Know that, if we often quarrel with our wives, while expressing ourselves poorly at the same time, then, undoubtedly, they will respect and honour us less. In most cases, they do not have sufficient time to tend to us because they are busy with household chores. Therefore, show patience and tolerance and forgive them. Counsel and instruct them gently and with compassion, without being coarse. What they do is enough for us.

And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

The writing of this book was completed in Muharram of 1436 hijri. May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon our master Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his family and his companions!

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SECTION I.....	4
THE NAFS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO HUMAN MORAL QUALITIES.....	4
CHAPTER 1.....	4
THE ESSENCE OF THE NAFS.....	4
THE NAFS – THE MAIN ENEMY OF MAN.....	5
THE LEVELS OF THE HUMAN NAFS.....	6
CHAPTER 2.....	7
THE CLEANSING OF THE NAFS.....	7
THREE WAYS OF CLEANSING THE NAFS.....	8
CONFRONTING THE NAFS.....	8
SELF-CONTROL.....	10
STRUGGLE WITH THE NAFS.....	12
SELF-SATISFACTION.....	14
A GREAT TESTAMENT.....	16
CHAPTER 3.....	17
REPENTANCE.....	17
SECTION II.....	20
REPROACHABLE QUALITIES.....	20
CHAPTER 1.....	20
ENVY AND HOSTILITY.....	20
THE ESSENCE OF ENVY AND HOSTILITY AND THEIR FRUITS.....	20
HOW TO DEAL WITH THE ENVOUS.....	21
CHAPTER 2.....	22
ARROGANCE.....	22
THE SOURCE OF ARROGANCE.....	22
ARROGANCE - SATAN’S RUINATION.....	22
THE HEALING OF ARROGANCE.....	22
CHAPTER 3.....	23
LOVE OF PROMINENCE.....	23
THE ESSENCE OF THE LOVE OF PROMINENCE.....	23
THE HEALING OF THE LOVE OF PROMINENCE.....	24

CHAPTER 4.....	25
ANGER	25
THE CAUSE OF ANGER	25
REFLECTION OF DEEDS IN VARIOUS VISIONS.....	25
HOW TO BEHAVE IF CONSUMED WITH ANGER	26
CHAPTER 5.....	27
SLANDER AND GOSSIP	27
THE ESSENCE OF SLANDER AND GOSSIP	27
THE DANGER OF SLANDER AND GOSSIP	28
STATEMENTS CONCERNING SLANDER AND GOSSIP	29
HOW TO ACT IF SLANDER IS COMMITTED	30
CHAPTER 6.....	32
LOVE FOR WORLDLY THINGS	32
WORSHIPPING WITH LOVE OF THE WORLD IS MERE FATIGUE OF THE LIMBS	33
ADMONITION CONCERNING THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE WORLDLY LIFE.....	34
STATEMENTS BY THE RIGHTEOUS ABOUT THE MORTAL WORLD	35
SECTION III	37
RESPECTFUL QUALITIES	37
CHAPTER 1	37
SERVITUDE	37
THE ESSENCE OF SERVITUDE TO THE LORD	37
SIGNS OF SERVITUDE TO ALLAH	38
PERCEIVING ONESELF AS INFERIOR TO EVERY COMPANION	40
EXONERATION OF ONE’S SOUL AND CENSURE FROM THE CREATED ARE CONTRADICTIONARY TO SERVITUDE.....	41
YOU ARE A SERVANT OF THAT WHICH OCCUPIES YOUR HEART .	42
SUPPLICATION IS WORSHIP	43
QUALITIES WHICH IMPEDE TRUE WORSHIP	43
FRUITS OF SERVITUDE TO THE ALMIGHTY	45
CHAPTER 2.....	46
CONTENTMENT, OBEDIENCE AND ENTRUSTING	46
THE ESSENCE OF CONTENTMENT WITH THE LORD, COMPLETE	

SURRENDER TO HIM (TASLIM) AND ENTRUSTING OF ALL YOUR AFFAIRS TO HIM (TAFWIZ).....	46
THE MERIT OF BEING CONTENT WITH THE DECREE OF ALLAH	47
CONTENTMENT AND ABSOLUTE SUBMISSION TO HIM – THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF SERVITUDE TO ALLAH	49
COMFORT IN COMPLETE SUBMISSION.....	51
WHOEVER IS SATISFIED WILL HAVE CONTENTMENT	55
CHAPTER 3.....	55
SHAME THE ESSENCE OF SHAME	55
SHAME IS A PART OF FAITH	58
EXAMPLES OF SHAME OF PEOPLE OF TARIQAH	58
ALLAH’S SHAME BEFORE HIS SERVANT.....	59
CHAPTER 4.....	59
MORAL CHARACTER	59
MERITS OF GOOD MANNERS	59
NOBLE MORALS ARE THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION	63
STATEMENTS REGARDING MORAL CHARACTER.....	66
MANIFESTATIONS OF GOOD MORAL CHARACTER	67
CHAPTER 5.....	71
ASCETICISM IN THE WORLD	71
THE MEANING OF RENUNCIATION OF THE WORLDLY.....	71
CONTEMPT FOR THE WORLDLY IS NECESSARY - RENOUNCE IT ..	72
THE REALITY OF ASCETICISM	75
THE MUSLIM’S WAY OF LOVING THE WORLDLY	76
THE MEASURE OF VALUES	78
THE PROPHET’S ﷺ RENUNCIATION	80
THE FRUITS OF ASCETICISM	81
CHAPTER 6.....	82
TRUTHFULNESS (SIDQ)	82
THE MEANING OF TRUTHFULNESS.....	82
THE EXCELLENCE OF TRUTHFULNESS	82
THE HARM OF FALSEHOOD	83
STATEMENTS ABOUT TRUTHFULNESS	84

CHAPTER 7.....	85
PATIENCE AND ABSTAINING FROM AIDING THE NAFS	85
THE ESSENCE OF PATIENCE (SABR).....	85
THE VIRTUE AND REWARD OF PATIENCE	86
BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT PATIENCE	87
THE NATURES OF PATIENCE (SABR)	87
THE VIRTUE OF HAVING PATIENCE TO HARM INFLICTED BY PEOPLE	88
PEOPLE’S NEED TO BE PATIENT TOWARDS HARM.....	89
WHAT REINFORCES PATIENCE.....	91
DOMINANCE ONLY TO ALLAH	93
EXCESSIVE HARM IS A SIGN OF THE HOUR.....	97
THE GOODNESS IN ENDURING HARM	100
CHAPTER 8.....	100
FEAR AND HOPE.....	100
CHAPTER 9.....	102
MERCY	102
THE PEOPLE OF TARIQAH ARE THE PEOPLE OF MERCY	103
CHAPTER 10	105
JEALOUSY.....	105
ALMIGHTY ALLAH IS VERY JEALOUS	106
CHAPTER 11	107
SELFLESSNESS, MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY.....	107
THE ESSENCE OF GENEROSITY	107
THE VIRTUE OF MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY.....	110
BEAUTIFUL WORDS ABOUT MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY ..	111
STORIES ABOUT SELFLESSNESS, MAGNANIMITY AND GENEROSITY	111
CHAPTER 12	114
SPIRITUAL CHIVALRY AND MANLINESS THE ESSENCE OF MAGNANIMITY AND COURAGE.....	114
COURAGE AND MANLINESS – FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE TARIQAH	115
BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT CHIVALRY AND MANLINESS ..	116

BEAUTIFUL STORIES ABOUT MANLINESS AND SPIRITUAL CHIVALRY.....	118
CHAPTER 13	120
FREEDOM	120
BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT FREEDOM	121
CHAPTER 14	122
LOVE.....	122
STATEMENTS ABOUT LOVE.....	123
CHAPTER 15	124
SINCERITY	124
THE ESSENCE OF SINCERITY	124
REMEDY AGAINST OSTENTATION	125
SUBTLITIES OF HYPOCRISY	127
BEAUTIFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT SINCERITY.....	129
CHAPTER 16	130
HELP AND RESPECT FOR PEOPLE.....	130
THE VIRTUE OF FULFILLING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE.....	131
CHAPTER 17	133
SCRUPULOUSNESS (WARA`) THE ESSENCE OF	
SCRUPULOUSNESS (WARA`).....	133
SCRUPULOUSNESS DOES NOT NEGATE THE ENJOYMENT OF	
GOD’S BLESSINGS.....	134
BEAUTIFUL WORDS ABOUT SCRUPULOUSNESS	135
EXAMPLES OF THE SCRUPULOUSNESS OF RIGHTEOUS	
PREDECESSORS.....	137
CHAPTER 18	138
RETREATING FROM PEOPLE.....	138
THE HARM OF EXCESSIVE MINGLING WITH PEOPLE	138
CHAPTER 19	139
MODESTY AND HUMILITY THE ESSENCE OF MODESTY AND	
HUMILITY.....	139
SIGNS OF MODESTY	140
EXAMPLES OF THE MODESTY OF RIGHTEOUS PREDECESSORS.	140
ADMONITION FOR THE ARROGANT	142

CHAPTER 20	146
COUNSEL	146
CHAPTER 21	147
SHAKING HANDS	147
CHAPTER 22	148
HONOURING ONE’S PARENTS.....	148
CHAPTER 23	149
SADNESS.....	149
CHAPTER 24	149
HUNGER.....	149
CHAPTER 25	150
STEADFASTNESS (ISTIQAHAH).....	150
CHAPTER 26	152
LOVE OF COURTESY	152
CHAPTER 27	154
JUSTICE.....	154
CHAPTER 28	154
LOVE AND ABHORRENCE FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH.....	154
CHAPTER 29	155
CONTENTMENT	155
CHAPTER 30	156
SILENCE.....	156
CHAPTER 31	156
KEEPING A LOW-PROFILE	156
CHAPTER 32	157
VISITING BROTHERS IN FAITH	157
CHAPTER 33	157
GRATITUDE THE ESSENCE OF GRATITUDE.....	157
GRATITUDE – A BLESSING FROM ALLAH	158
ONLY ALMIGHTY ALLAH IS WORTHY OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE	158
THE LOWEST DEGREE OF GRATITUDE.....	159
THOSE WHO PRAISE ALLAH IN EVERY STATE	160

CHAPTER 34	161
PROMOTION OF VIRTUE AND PREVENTION OF VICE.....	161
CHAPTER 35	163
FEAR OF GOD.....	163
CHAPTER 36	164
TRUST (TAWAKKUL) IN ALLAH THE ESSENCE OF TRUST.....	164
FEATURES OF ONE WHO TRUSTS IN ALLAH.....	165
USING REASONS DOES NOT CONTRADICT TRUST.....	165
GOLDEN WORDS ABOUT TRUST.....	166
THE VIRTUE OF TRUST IN GOD.....	169
CHAPTER 37	172
POSITIVE OPINION ABOUT ALMIGHTY ALLAH.....	172
CHAPTER 38	172
PATIENCE WITH A WIFE’S HARM.....	172

Sheikh Ahmad-Haji Abdulaev

Mufti of Dagestan

Virtues of the Righteous

Translated from the published Arabic, Avar and Russian versions

Translated by: Ghaydar Petherbridge and

Ibrahim Hj Abdulaev

© Muftiyat of the Republic of Dagestan

Makhachkala 2022